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## RED ALERT 2

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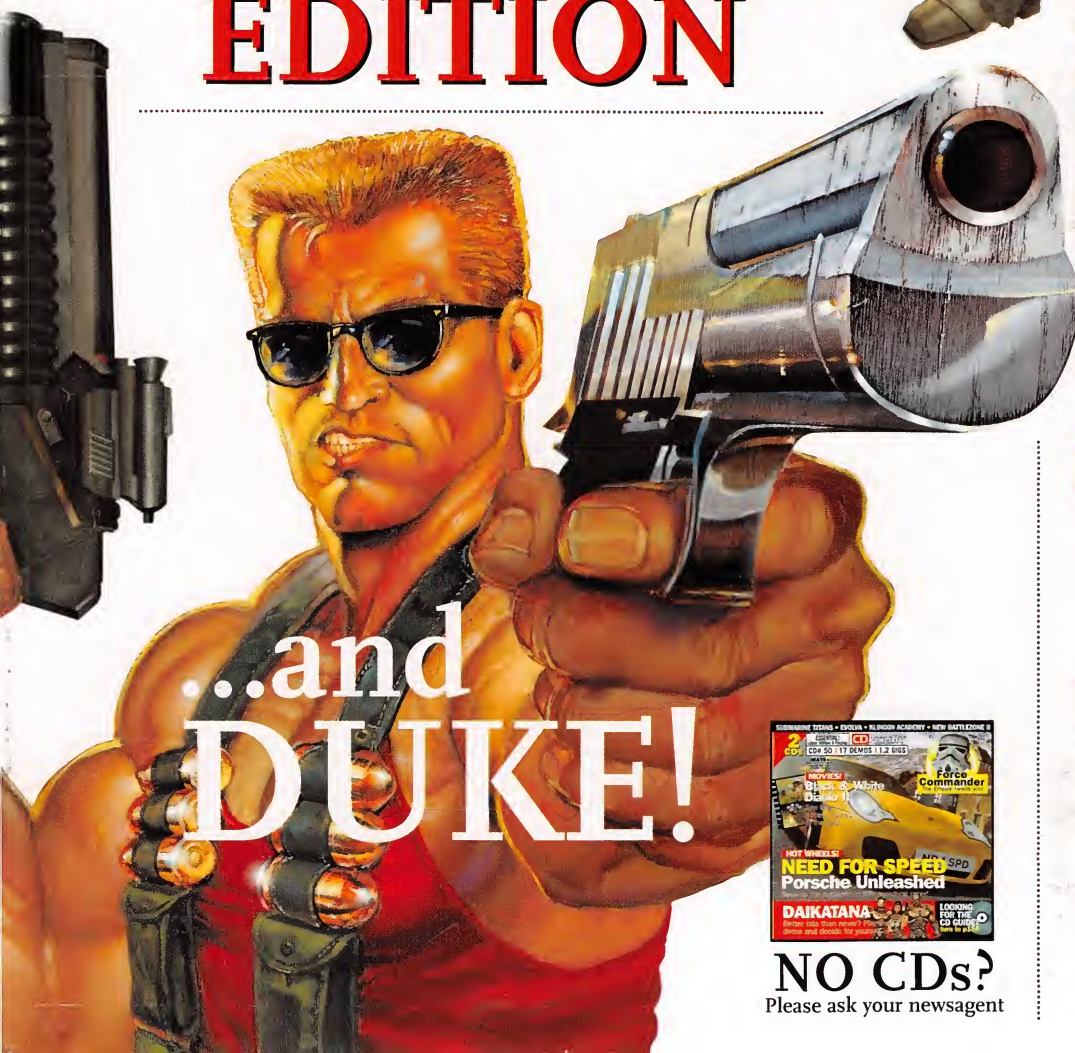
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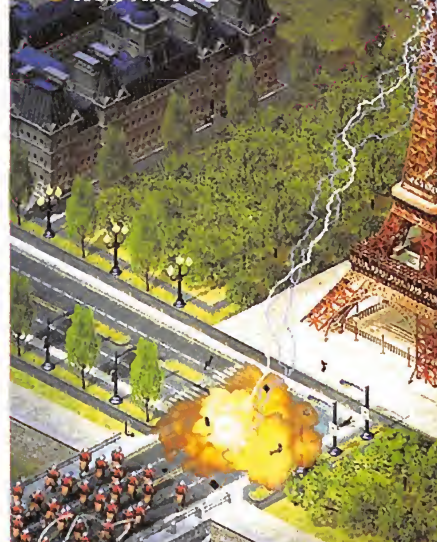
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## EDITORIAL

*Scene: One Monday morning in the PC PowerPlay office. The PCPP crew each troop in at regular intervals, ready to commence the day's work. David's in first, as usual.*

**David:** Let's see if my computer's working today...

**March:** Good morning.

**David:** Hey... I hope your weekend was agreeable?

**March:** Aye.

**Brett:** G'day. Guess what? I saw the finest looking girl on the train on the way in...

**David:** You say that every morning!

**Ashley:** Hi.

**David:** Hey Ashley...

**Brett:** Hi.

**March:** Aye. Does anyone want to go skydiving?

**David:** Morning Malky.

**Malcolm:** Is email down again?

**All:** <groan>

*Time passes.*

**Brett:** Holy moly! Did you see this stuff on Red Alert 2?

**David:** I remember reading

"...stripped-down Tiberian Sun engine" in the press release.

**Malcolm:** Any pics yet?

**March:** A couple. Maybe we can run pics from our original Red Alert preview from 4 years ago. No one will know the difference.

**Brett:** Of course they will! This one's got dolphins.

**David:** And coloured lights. Woohoo.

**Malcolm:** Hey, don't be so harsh. Remember the old adage: It's the gameplay that matters, not the graphics.

**David:** Which is why Ashley spends all his time playing Tetris, right?

Anyway, March, have you finished that Chris Roberts interview yet?

**March:** Yeah! Yeah, well almost. Just gotta do a couple of box-outs. Hey,

did I tell you what a nice guy he is?

**Malcolm:** Yeah, but I'll never forgive him for not casting Mark Hamill in the Wing Commander movie.

*More time passes.*

**Brett:** Wait a minute, something's missing... Has anyone seen our Editor?

**All:** <blank looks>

**Malcolm:** Well, someone has to edit this mag, so maybe one of you guys should do it.

**March:** David?

**David:** March?

**All:** Brett?

*To be continued...*



34 Diablo II





# spotlight

**HEADLINES:** Red Alert 2 • Return to Castle Wolfenstein • Empire Earth • Infestation • The Great Escape • Heart of Stone • Practorian • Startopia

# Red Alert 2

ALL THAT COLD WAR PARANOIA WAS ACTUALLY JUSTIFIED



• Genre: RTS • Developer: Westwood Studios • Due: 4th Qtr 2000



How Westwood managed to keep news of Red Alert 2's development under wraps is anyone's guess, though some speculate that they may have learned their lesson after the release of one of gaming's greatest disappointments: Tiberian Sun. Whatever the reason, this next title in Westwood's RTS stable

may well be a litmus test of the company's ability to remain competitive within the industry. As is to be expected under such circumstances, the pressure's on.

Red Alert 2 will, unsurprisingly, be set several years after the Allied defeat of Stalin and his expansionist regime. In his place, the Allies install

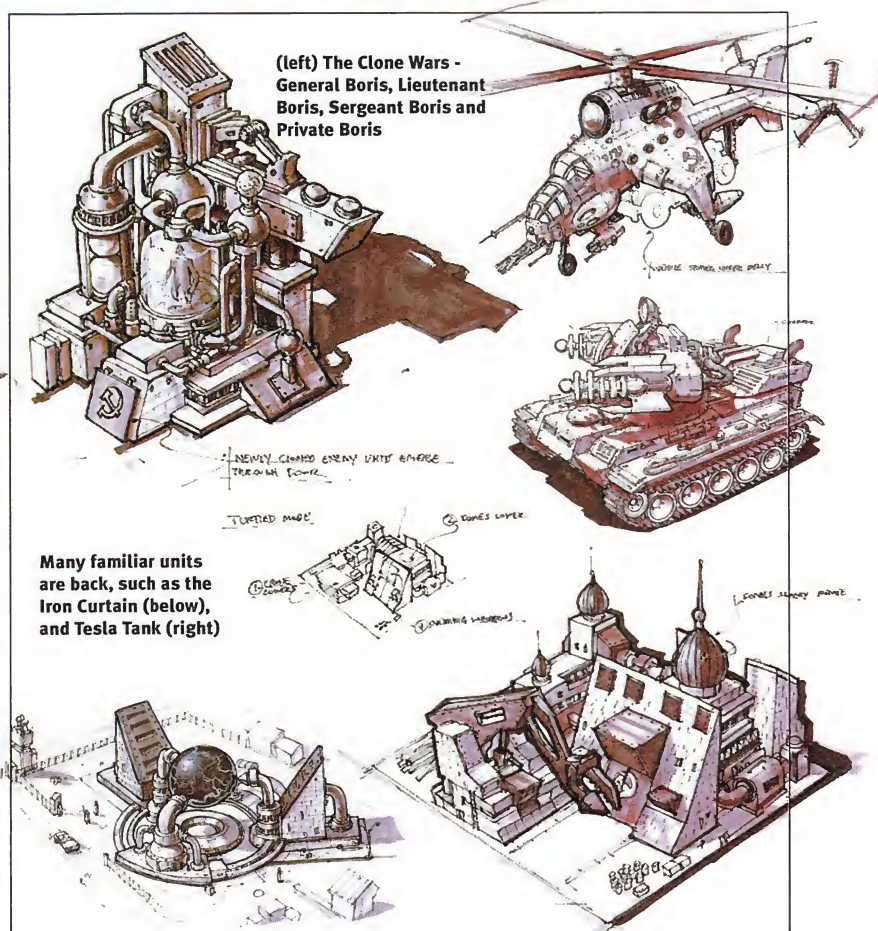
what they perceive as a puppet dictator; one General Romanov. Unfortunately, Romanov is not the forgetful type, and so vows to avenge the death of his country's former leader. Fast forward a few more years and Romanov's forces (amassed in total secrecy) succeed in catching the

Allies off guard, and score some prime US real estate (namely New York City and Washington DC) in the bargain. Playing as the Russians, the player must secure the remainder of the North American continent in the name of the Motherland, while the goal for Allied players is to





(above) Dolphins!  
(left) Soviet tanks rolling down the Champs Elysees  
(below) Aegis Cruisers attacking en masse



(left) The Clone Wars - General Boris, Lieutenant Boris, Sergeant Boris and Private Boris

Many familiar units are back, such as the Iron Curtain (below), and Tesla Tank (right)

halt the Russians' advance and take the fight to their home turf.

Having been caught completely off guard by the Russian invasion, the Allies will retain much of their technology from the original Red Alert, while the Russians will get to play with a slew of funky new toys. Tesla troopers, warriors with psychic abilities and colossal

Apocalypse Tanks are just some of the units that they'll have at their disposal. That's not to say that the Russians will be the ones having all the fun, however. Westwood have outfitted the Allies with Terror Drones (spider-like robots that thwart tank rushes using explosive suicide attacks), even more versatile spies and Aegis Cruisers that can launch

cruise missiles from the distant safety of the open ocean.

Strangely enough, the Allies will be enlisting the aid of dolphins in their capitalist crusade. Although little is known of their offensive capabilities, one would assume that these particular dolphins have been born and raised in captivity, considering that the majority of wild

dolphins are now interred within tuna cans.

The fact that Red Alert 2 utilises the antiquated Tiberian Sun engine may set alarm bells ringing, but early screenshots clearly indicate a significant improvement in graphic quality. In developing Red Alert 2, Westwood are employing an interesting, if risky, strategy. In an effort to streamline gameplay,

they have excised a number of features from the Tiberian Sun engine. Most noticeable will be the removal of terrain deformation, and the elimination of varying terrain layers. How successful this strategy is remains to be seen, but the answer will become readily apparent when the game is released in the final quarter of this year.



## FIRST LOOK!

# Return to Castle Wolfenstein

## THE ORIGINAL IS BACK IN STYLE

Despite their ominous appearance, it's hard not start drooling over these first three screenshots of Return to Castle Wolfenstein. Using the powerful Quake 3 engine, the picturesque sequel to one of the gaming community's best loved titles is being developed by Gray Matter Interactive Studios. According to the developer, Return to Castle Wolfenstein will boast the same action-packed, nazi-stomping gameplay that made the original such a hit. Once again it will be up to the player, cast as the imposing B.J.

Blazkowicz, to rip Hitler and his goose-stepping cronies a new one, and scuttle their plans for world domination in the bargain. Attendees at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo will be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the game in motion at Activision's stand, but the rest of us will have to wait patiently for the game's release.



Looks like no one's cleaned up the cobwebs and skeletons since we last visited the castle.



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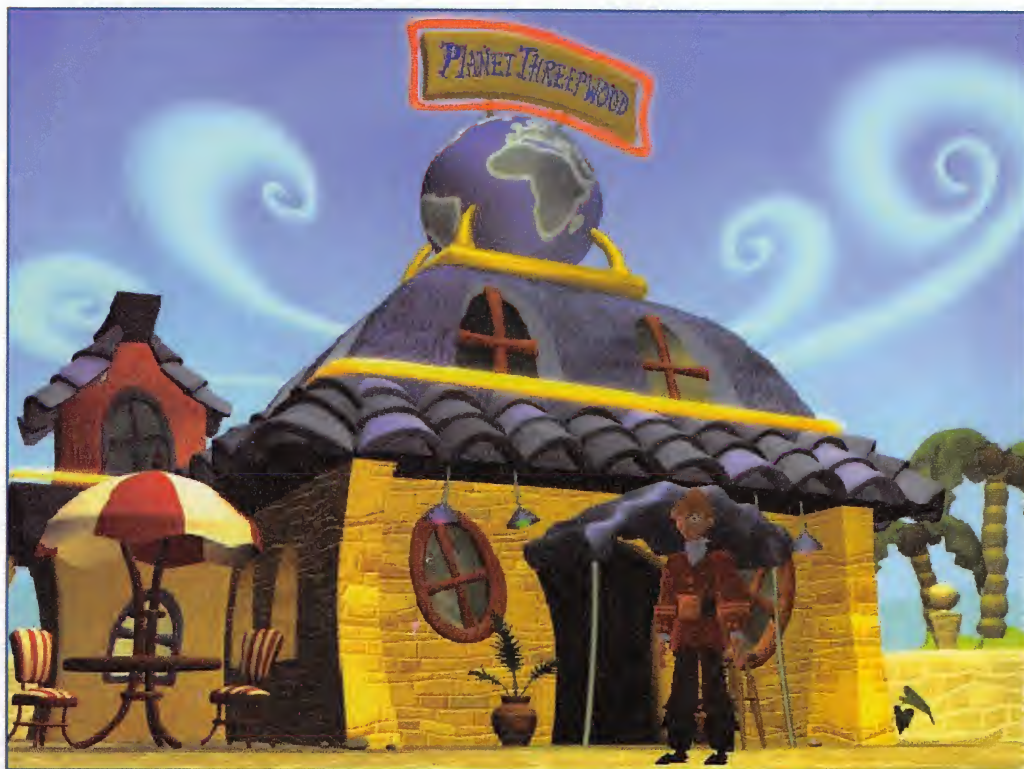
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Digital Anvil



# The Great Escape!

MORE MONKEY BUSINESS FROM LUCASARTS



LucasArts has confirmed that their next adventure title will be a fourth instalment in the incredibly popular Money Island series. The adventure gaming community has been eagerly awaiting a successor to the last critically acclaimed LucasArts adventure: Grim Fandango (let alone Curse of Monkey Island). Entitled *Escape from Monkey Island*, it was announced just prior to this year's E3.

Taking up (loosely) where we left off, *Escape from Monkey Island*

sees Guybrush Threepwood now married to his perennial damsel in distress, Elaine Marley. But there's trouble afoot as the two return from their honeymoon. Elaine has been declared dead and the Governor's mansion is up for demolition. Could it have something to do with the suspicious politician lurking around - Charles L. Charles? (If you didn't see this one coming, you've been out of the game too long!)

## Comic buffoonery

Continuing in the tradition of its predecessors, *Escape from Monkey Island* will be another romp in the comic stylings of "the team that brought you Sam n Max Hit the Road", combining puzzle solving and conversation with buffoonery and high adventure. Comedy gaming has always been LucasArts strong point and we're promised gags aplenty in that pirate patois that we know and love (ahargghh, me mates!). Of course, all the old favourites make a return including the voodoo witch, Wally, that coffin salesman, monkeys as far as the eye can see and none other than the Ghost Pirate LeChuck himself.

This latest adventure will see



The honeymoon took a turn for the worse after Guy revealed his fondness of monkeys.

Guybrush enters three dimensions (for those who didn't see him in *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*) - well sort of. Originally thought to be in an over-the-shoulder third person perspective, EMI looks to be in the Grim Fandango mode of rendered 3D background. From the look of the screenshots, limited at this stage, it looks to be a visual treat. Just what we'd expect after *Grim Fandango*.

It will be interesting to finally see *Escape from Monkey Island*, especially after the exodus of long time staff that LucasArts has witnessed in the past year. You can expect more details on the latest incarnation of Guybrush in our special E3 report next month. Maybe we'll finally discover what the Secret of Monkey Island REALLY is...



Guybrush in 3D. Still a geek.



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Some local beasts from Dirt Track Racing

## LOCAL FOCUS

A REGULAR SERIES WHERE WE PROFILE ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S GAME DEVELOPMENT STUDIOS AND THEIR CURRENT PROJECT.

# Ratbag

WE CAUGHT UP WITH RATBAG'S **MARK BRACKEN** TO FIND OUT THE LATEST ON **DIRT TRACK RACING**



**We receive several e-mails a week asking us why Dirt Track Racing hasn't been released here while it's been out overseas since Christmas. What has caused the delay?**

**Mark:** Dirt Track Racing has been delayed because we are saving the best for Australia, we have been hard at work modifying the game to include some local vehicles. There will be a variety of models from the 1970's through to current model vehicles. The street machine enthusiasts will be in for a special treat, as all vehicles will include a number of tuning options. We remain committed to the local market and we are also looking to localise future products. Dirt Track Racing will be available in July, so your readers should hassle their local software retailer to pre-order it.

**Are you happy with how the game has been received overseas?**

**Mark:** Yes, we have had an unbelievable response to Dirt Track Racing in the USA. We have received a number of accolades, including two Racing game of the Year awards and a number of PC Editor choice awards in leading USA gaming magazines. I am also pleased to say, Dirt Track racing is one of the fastest selling racing games in the USA at the moment. The Australian version will also be placed at a very affordable retail price of \$49.95.

Dirt Track Racing is a simulation, you really need to play the career mode if you want to see its full potential. I am sure the Australian gamers will love the local version. We aim to please.

**With Powerslide and Dirt Track, you seem to have set yourselves up as perhaps the best known game developers in the country. Despite your success, is it still difficult to be an independent game developer in Australia?**

**Mark:** Yes, we have received an excellent response from the Australian gaming community. This is primarily why we are localising Dirt Track Racing. If you want to survive in this game- you need to show consistency. We take particular care ensuring that our games are of a particularly high standard. With our second release also reaching benchmark status, we will continue to supply the World market. We haven't seen the need to incorporate in the USA to date. We now have over 30 people on full-time staff and we are currently working four projects. Two of which are PS2 titles. So expect to see a lot more from us in 2000.

In an effort to get back to our grass roots, we want to be a little more pro-active with our customers. Our new website will be launched in July. The new site will allow gamers to register for FREE membership. Ratbag members will be the first to receive product

information, demo's, including FREE tracks and other give aways.

**What's next for Ratbag on the PC?**

**Mark:** We have two additional PC products for 2000. One is a Sprint Car game and the other is Lead Foot - Stadium Off Road. Sprint Cars are amazing vehicles their 800hp engines and relatively light weight chassis, actually maintain a higher power to weight ratio than both Nascar and Formula 1 vehicles. The Sprint Car title really captures the essence of speed and some spectacular collisions. Lead Foot on the other hand is a Stadium off road title, with many varied jumps, banked turns and water traps. This is close contact racing at it's best!

Both titles are World firsts, Sprint cars will be shipped late in the third quarter of 2000 and Lead Foot will be available in the fourth quarter of 2000. Your readers will be pleased to know, Dirt Track Racing and the Sprint Car product will be modular, so you can import the tracks from Dirt Track Racing into Sprint Cars.



Local cars = Kingswoods (we hope)

## AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

Diablo 2 and Team Fortress 2 held firm this month, the duo again separated by a mere handful of votes. Interest in Deus Ex accelerated once more to put it only just behind the top two. Whether it's down to the redesign or not, but Warcraft 3 plunged down to fifth like an over-inflated technology share. New entrant Motocross Madness 2 actually shared tenth with both Dungeon Siege and Daikatana (!), but secured the position thanks to a few more 1st place votes.

Send your Top Five Most Wanted Games to: [wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)



This month's winner, **Ben Brown** from **Newport, VIC**, takes home a copy of Starlancer

1	DIABLO 2	◀
2	Team Fortress 2	◀
3	Deus Ex	◀
4	Duke Nukem Forever	◀
5	Warcraft 3	◀
6	Baldur's Gate 2	◀
7	Grand Prix 3	◀
8	Black & White	◀
9	Halo	◀
10	Motocross Madness 2	◀





Heart of Stone: an action/strategy affair.



Praetorians: this is pure strategy.

# Pyromaniacs

## TWO NEW GAMES FROM THE COMMANDOS GUYS

Our favourite Spanish game developer, Pyro Studios - well, okay, we don't actually know of any others, but never mind - has announced a couple of highly promising new games to follow up the assured success of Commandos 2 later this year.

The first, entitled Heart of Stone, is a fascinating mix of swashbuckling adventure in 16th century Europe, roleplaying and tactical combat. Similar to Commandos, the game's main characters each have their own specialised skills that must be used in conjunction to complete mission objectives.

The other, obscurely titled Praetorians, looks like a rival for our own Shogun: Total War. A realtime strategy game of - dare we say? - EPIC proportions, it uses an advanced 3D engine to depict the battlefields upon which the Roman Empire was built.

You'll have to wait until next year for both of them, though.



## HIS NAME'S ZOG

Set for release early next year from Pixeleers, It Came For Zog is an adventure game very much in the vein of Grim Fandango. Pre-rendered backdrops, polygon characters and a warped sense of humour all feature in a tale of cavemen, aliens and kidnapping.



## THE NEXT GEN!

14 Degrees East, a division of Interplay, has begun work on a follow-up to Starfleet Command, the detailed tactical combat game set in the Star Trek universe and based on the Starfleet Battles boardgame. Two new races are anticipated to complement the original's selection of six.

## FIRST LOOK!

# Startopia

• Genre: Alien Management • Developer: Mucky Foot • Due: 4th Qtr 2000

Take the off-the-wall humour of Bullfrog's Theme games, add a helping of the at times anal (literally) man management aspects of The Sims, then throw in a clutch of weird creatures from the across the galaxy. The end result is the new game from Mucky Foot, Startopia, previously known as Space Station.

Drawing upon the developer's prior experience at the aforementioned Bullfrog, Startopia asks the player to take charge of the day-to-day running of a space station. It's up to you to refurbish your station after an apocalyptic war in an effort to attract visitors from the farthest reaches of the universe. Each alien race has its own area of expertise, whether it be in labour, trade, diplomacy or - our favourite - fuel. Apparently, the waste products of certain creatures can be used to power the space station. Useful, yes, but you wouldn't want to share a room with them.



Think of The Sims, then remove the mundane earthlings and add bizarre aliens!





## OOH, SCARY!

Capcom recently announced that the latest chapter in the Resident Evil series would be making its way to PC later this year. We asked colleague and Playstation expert, Kevin Cheung, for a comment: "I hope it's not low-res," he said.

## PIRATES

The rejuvenated Bethesda Softworks announced yet another game this month. Like Morrowind, it's another RPG, but this time with a pirate theme. Sea Dogs promises a highly nonlinear experience for those prepared to brave its treacherous waters.



## FIRST LOOK!

# I-War 2

Genre: Space Sim • Developer: Infogrames • Due: Late 2000

The original Independence War remains a title that looms large over the space sim genre. By stepping outside the genre's conventions, I-War established a large and devout fanbase. It eschewed the usual scenario of small, nimble craft engaged in close quarter dogfights, opting instead to simulate realistic space physics and place the player in command of a capital ship.

I-War 2 won't mess with this formula. Proper 3D support (the I-War expansion pack added only Glide support) means everyone will be able to savour the impressive graphics engine. A more open feel to the mission structure will also see the sequel heading closer to free-form Elite or Privateer territory. Freelancer might not have the universe all to itself, after all.



"Imposing" would be an understatement

# A Rational Decision

DEVELOPERS OF PCPP'S **GAME OF THE YEAR** HEAD DOWN UNDER

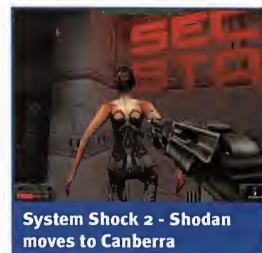
In what is a sure sign of the health of the Australian game development community, Irrational Games, creator of PCPP's Game of '99 System Shock 2, has moved to establish an offshoot studio based in Canberra. Headed up by Jonathan Chey, who founded Irrational (and just happens to be a local lad, too), the studio will be called Irrational Games

Australia and has begun work on an as-yet-unannounced title.

When asked about his commitment to the Australian industry, Irrational's co-founder Ken Levine, explained, "The Australian games development community is growing fast and we will encourage that growth through our new Australian office."

"Our new company

brings the experience and talent of Irrational Games to Australia and will provide exciting new opportunities for local developers," said Chey. While you'll be able to read about IGA's first game in a forthcoming Developer Diary exclusive to PC PowerPlay, anyone interested in working with them should visit [www.irrational-games.com](http://www.irrational-games.com).



System Shock 2 - Shodan moves to Canberra



# ASUS AGP-V7700

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## TO VIDEO

Sinister Games are currently working on *Soldier*: a thirdperson shooter based on the Kurt Russel movie of the same name. Games based on movies have an unsurprising tendency to fall far below expectations, but Sinister is adamant that *Soldier* will be an exception. Hmm...



## FIRST LOOK!

# Empire Earth

• Genre: RTS • Developer: Stainless Steel Studios  
• Due: 1st Qtr 2001

Empire Earth is coming to us from the creator and lead designer of the original *Age of Empires*, Rick Goodman. Having formed Stainless Steel Studios after distancing himself from Ensemble Studios' future direction (at the time, they were beginning work on the technically brilliant *AoEII*), Rick had a grander vision of how the RTS would evolve.

Hence, this rather comprehensive RTS game. Spanning 500 millennia (500,000 BC - 2500 AD), *Empire Earth* documents the journey of homo erectus from the dawn of humankind to a positively high-tech and yet to be experienced future.

Featuring hundreds of discoveries and inventions that affect the running of your empire (more the fifty percent of these will be non-military), *Empire Earth* begins to sound suspiciously like another *Civilization*. However, that which strikes us as most ambitious about this title is the fact that it does all this as a realtime strategy affair. Madness!



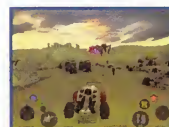
Diversity is sure to be the game's strength.



# Infestation

• Genre: Action/Strategy • Developer: Ubi Soft  
• Due: 3rd Qtr 2000

A curious combination of action, strategy and all-terrain driving, *Infestation* is something of a pleasant surprise. Its inherent gameplay simplicity and hackneyed, almost camp, cutscenes exert a peculiar hold over the player. While the game adopts many of the tried and true conventions of arcade blast-fests, it also features an element of originality that is refreshing to say the least. Transformable vehicle chassis lend variety to each mission, while a large selection of weapons and a seemingly endless array of enemy types make this game perfect for those who like to just relax and have some fun.



## COMING SOON

PCPP'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT YOU'LL BE PLAYING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. JUST MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT THE GRAIN OF SALT READY, OKAY?

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	AND BEYOND...	WHO KNOWS?
<b>Anachronox</b> (Eidos) <b>Diablo 2</b> (Sierra) <b>Icewind Dale</b> (Interplay) <b>MDK 2</b> (Interplay) <b>Vampire: The Masquerade</b> (Activision)	<b>Dark Reign 2</b> (Activision) <b>Deus Ex</b> (Eidos) <b>Dirt Track Racing</b> (Jack of all Games) <b>Motocross Madness 2</b> (Microsoft) <b>Rune</b> (GOD)	<b>B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth</b> (Hasbro) <b>Colin McRae Rally 2</b> (Eidos) <b>Grand Prix 3</b> (Hasbro) <b>Ground Control</b> (Sierra) <b>Oni</b> (Bungie)	<b>Alone In The Dark 4</b> (Infogrames) <b>Baldur's Gate 2</b> (Interplay) <b>Giants: Citizen Kabuto</b> (Interplay) <b>Obi-Wan</b> (Lucasarts)	<b>Commandos 2</b> (Eidos) <b>Dungeon Siege</b> (Microsoft) <b>Halo</b> (Bungie) <b>Loose Cannon</b> (Microsoft) <b>X-Com: Alliance</b> (Hasbro)	<b>Black &amp; White</b> (Electronic Arts) <b>Duke Nukem Forever</b> (GT) <b>Freelancer</b> (Microsoft) <b>Team Fortress 2</b> (Sierra) <b>Tribes 2</b> (Sierra) <b>Warcraft 3</b> (Sierra)





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Curved surface support has been put to good use. The big black ball of death in the background is the Kamikaze weapon in action

# Team Arena

THE FIRST OFFICIAL EXPANSION PACK FOR **QUAKE 3** IS ANNOUNCED

The team at id Software are already working in earnest on an add-on pack for Quake 3 Arena. As the title might suggest, Q3A: Team Arena will focus on team play: an aspect sorely missing from the original Q3A, and one of the only areas in which Unreal Tournament prevailed. With the multitude of third party modifications and total conversions created for all of id's titles, it is interesting to note that this will be the first official add-on

Few volunteered for the Bosnian leg of the torch relay



produced by the industry giant since the Master Levels pack for the venerable Doom.

In designing the add-on, id is endeavouring to impart a completely different feel to it, to the point where Q3A and the add-on will almost feel like separate games. Accordingly, new character models, revamped AI and level layouts specifically oriented toward team play all reflect this exciting design ethic. A new interface, new weapons and powerups and some very interesting new play modes will serve to further differentiate the add-on from its progenitor. Old favourites like the Nailgun will be making a welcome return, and some devious new devices like the Kamikaze (which, when activated, vapourises the bearer and any nearby players in an enormous conflagration) will make battles even more frenetic. Proximity Mines will force players to be light on their toes, while cruel bastards will find joy in affixing the aforementioned explosives to the backs of their enemies and watching them panic in the inexorable countdown to detonation.

## Mighty obelisks

Many of the play modes will be

based around the core CTF concept, with some interesting variations. Harvester, for example, generates a sphere at the centre of the map every time one player frags another. The fragger (or a team member) must then attempt to collect the sphere and carry it into the heart of the enemy base. There, the spheres can be deposited at the base of an obelisk, which sustains further damage with the placement of additional spheres. Destruction of the enemy obelisk results in victory for the player's team. In Obelisk mode, the overall goal remains the same, but the means differs significantly. Rather than using spheres to destroy them, the Obelisks must be destroyed using weapons fire alone. This forces the teams to employ concerted attack tactics involving the defence of a designated obelisk destroyer.

To spice things up even further, additional play modes will be included. Because the add-on is still in development, we can probably expect some extra surprises to be included in the final version. A release date is not yet known, as id has once again issued a "when it's done" statement, but this is one add-on we're really hanging for. ■



# Counter-Strike

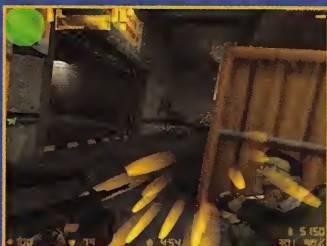
THE POPULAR HALF-LIFE MOD GETS VALVE'S OFFICIAL STAMP

[www.counter-strike.net](http://www.counter-strike.net)

Half Life developer, Valve, has announced that version 1.0 of Counter-Strike will be included with an upcoming official Half Life patch. Counter-Strike, an extremely popular counter-terrorist modification with an emphasis on realism, has been dubbed the 'Rainbow 6' of Half Life mods. Players fight on one of two teams as either terrorists or counter-terrorist operatives, and each side is outfitted with its own unique range of weapons. Mission objectives include assassination, rescue, bomb diffusion and more.

Support from Valve extends past simply including Counter-Strike with a patch, though. Intent on maximising the mod's potential, Valve are also funding further development of Counter-Strike and providing technical assistance. This sort of after-market support from a developer is virtually unprecedented (particularly in the case of products to be released as free upgrades) and certainly bodes well for the mod developing community as a whole.

In-depth information on Counter-Strike, as well as beta versions available for download, can be found at the official web site.



The latest version of Team Fortress will also come in the next patch.



## Evercrackdown

YOUR PC IS SAFE FROM VERANT'S PRYING EYES

Players of the phenomenally popular massively multiplayer RPG, Everquest, were recently up in arms over a number of regulations introduced by the game's developer. In a bid to quell the increasing use of stat-altering hack programs, Verant Interactive attempted to include an application that would automatically search players' hard drives for offending programs (with their latest upgrade patch). They went on to threaten to bar players who refused to install the

patch, but an instant backlash from customers saw the company retract the statement and scrap any plans to include the aforementioned 'sniffer app' with the patch. Not to be outdone in the hardline stakes, Sony officially banned the sale of characters and items online. According to the company, such auctions promote cheating and animosity between players. With no way to enforce such a regulation, Sony's proclamation seems futile at best.

## UT 1941

[www.planetunreal.com/reactor4](http://www.planetunreal.com/reactor4)

Reactor 4, creator of the infamous NAM and WW2GI, are currently working on an action/strategy WWII Total Conversion for Unreal Tournament. Though there's no word yet on a release date for 1941, you can track its progress at the site above.



Right: A flare lights up the night sky.



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# Neverwinter Nights

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ONLINE ROLEPLAYING GAMES WILL PUT THE STORY FIRST

[www.neverwinternights.com](http://www.neverwinternights.com)

In the excitement surrounding the upcoming Icewind Dale and Baldur's Gate II, many gamers will have overlooked this Advanced Dungeons & Dragons title being crafted by BioWare. Slated for release in the first quarter next year, it will be one of the first games to take advantage of the soon-to-be-released 3rd Edition of AD&D. It will also signal a new direction for online roleplaying games. Through all this, Neverwinter Nights is creating quite a buzz; it's certainly at the top of my list of games to wait for with bated breath.



## Winter Solstice

Set in the city of Neverwinter (which is situated on the Sword Coast to the north of the city of Baldur's Gate), the storyline is being kept secret by BioWare's lead writer/designer for the game, Rob Bartel. "We're currently keeping the new story under wraps but we can say this: our official campaign will involve its players in an epic tale of faith, war, and betrayal that will leave the mark of Neverwinter long upon their hearts."

The game's most exciting feature, though, is not the single player storyline, but the powerful game-design component dubbed the Solstice Toolset. In fact, BioWare recommends you play through the single player story in multiplayer. While the main game is divided up into chapters, or "modules", Neverwinter Nights will ship with the tools necessary to tinker with or even craft your own modules and adventures. You simply select certain variables and the hard work will be done for you by the toolset.

Indeed, the Solstice Toolset is a critical component of BioWare's vision for Neverwinter Nights. "It is an easy-to-use, fully-fledged roleplaying game construction set that will be shipping with every copy of the game," explains Bartel. "It's the same tools we are using in-house to create the official campaign, so it will have all the bells and whistles that we rely on here at BioWare. Advanced users will be able to 'pop the



hood' and tinker freely with our powerful scripting language, but there will also be a wide variety of mini-tools and help wizards to walk the rest of us mere mortals through the module development process. In short, we want creating a module to be a simple, intuitive and short experience for even novice computer users."

## Portal parties

The primary focus is on developing what some fans have already dubbed an Intimate Multiplayer Online RolePlaying Game: where a small party of adventurers play through a story-based game under the guidance of an all-powerful Dungeon Master. At this point, neither BioWare nor Interplay, the game's publisher, has formally committed to hosting a persistent, massively multiplayer world based on the Neverwinter Nights framework.

But this is not to say it hasn't been given serious consideration, as Bartel reveals: "Just because we currently aren't planning a massively multiplayer world doesn't mean that Neverwinter Nights doesn't allow for them or that a number of them aren't already in development by members of our fan community. While we've yet to perform any serious stress tests, we're expecting that a host with a standard cable modem will be able to support approximately 64 players on their computer."

What this means is that while 64 players is the expected maximum for a single computer to be



Dank caves and catacombs will teem with hostiles





able to cope with, it will be possible for one computer to be linked to another via a "portal". Only 64 people will be able to be on areas hosted by one computer, but two of them linked together will be able to hold up to 128, and three will be able to hold 192, etc. With the preliminary scripting language already released to be tinkered with by fans ([www.neverwinter nights.com/markbrock.html](http://www.neverwinter nights.com/markbrock.html)), there are already several groups putting together development teams for their own persistent online worlds. Check out <http://theredhand.net/> and <http://www.lissiak.com/argyle/> for more info on these.

### Unmatched flexibility

It's this kind of interaction between player and designer that should ensure Neverwinter Nights builds a very healthy online community. Bartel believes the Solstice Toolset means the game has few limits: "The Solstice Toolset ensures that there will always be another adventure around the next corner, another epic tale or heroic battle down that dungeon stairwell. At the same time, its flexibility allows for a wide variety of gaming styles: intense, roleplay-oriented campaigns; shorter story-based adventures; combat-heavy dungeon crawls; persistent worlds of every sort imaginable; fantasy deathmatch; 'capture the flag'; taverns and in-character gathering places; team vs team guildwars... The list is endless."

While Neverwinter Nights isn't scheduled for release until early next year, the considerable following the game has already generated definitely marks it down as to keep a close eye on in the coming months.

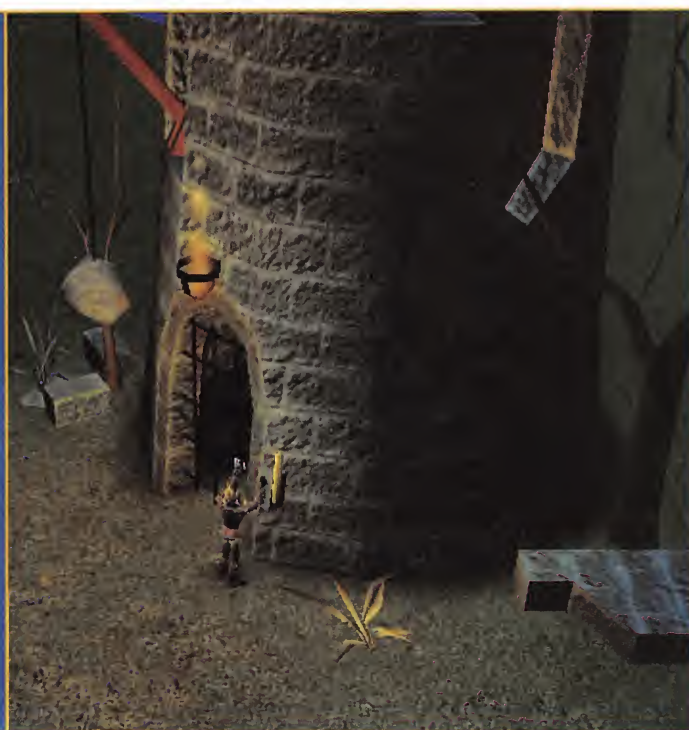
Murray Philbrick



### Cheaters never prosper

However, this flexibility also poses an interesting problem for BioWare: just how do you control "cheating" when the game allows anyone to create a powerful character in its toolset from the get-go? As a part of its proposed Neverwinter.net (a similar prospect to Blizzard's Battle.net), BioWare is planning on putting in place what they've dubbed a Character Vault. Basically, this will be a secure place in which characters for the game will be able to advance at a set rate without fear of having characters of equal level but wildly different power.

"The Character Vault is a big, communal measuring stick," Bartel confirms. "In other words, people need to know what a standard character of any given level ought to look like: how powerful are his/her magic items, how talented is he/she in his/her chosen profession, what sorts of abilities and statistics is he/she likely to have? That way, when a Level 10 character from your campaign meets a Level 10 character from my campaign, they'll be able to meet as equals and their new Dungeon Master will have at least a basic idea of what to expect from them. The system functions through real world time limitations on character advancement. The system will judge fair advancement in a 24-hour period for a character of your level and filter any advancement beyond that limit. Additionally, the system will limit the equipment your character can use based on his/her level. The goal of the Character Vault system is to set a level play environment for players to participate in."





# Ultima Online: The Next Age?

IS THERE TROUBLE BREWING IN **BRITANNIA** OR IS THIS JUST ALL A STORM IN A TEACUP?



Raph's easygoing and generous manner has seen him become a favourite personality with the UO community

This news piece originally began as a humble report of the recent visit to these shores by Raph Koster - a.k.a. Designer Dragon, former Lead Designer of Ultima Online and UO The Second Age - to christen the recently opened local Australasian UO shard, Oceania (for more info, see the news piece elsewhere on this page). Known for his passion for UO, dedication to its subscribers and an absolutely brilliant mind, Raph became the surrogate (and extremely well-received) "face" of Ultima Online in Lord British's Ultima IX-related absence. His outstanding contributions to the successes of Ultima Online and the development of the massively multiplayer genre are also widely regarded. But not a week after his visit, it was confirmed that Raph Koster had put aside his latest project - the as yet unannounced Wing Commander/Privateer Online - and walked from Origin Systems, Inc. Whether this move took place before or after Origin's decision to can the Wing Commander/Privateer project is unclear.

And where to? Of all places, Origin's direct competition: the company behind the massively multiplayer RPG EverQuest - Verant Interactive. Although Raph's new role at Verant is yet to be confirmed, sources close to Raph suggest that he'll be spearheading the

development of Star Wars Online, Verant's latest massively multiplayer game (reported in PCPP #49).

With the recent departure of Richard Garriott, Origin has lost two key personalities important to Ultima's identity in as many months. Time will tell what effect this will have on their current projects.

## UO2 Update

Meanwhile, work on UO2 continues apace, with a new in-game screenshot giving a taste of what's to come. This ambitious title, which isn't supposed to succeed the original Ultima Online, is set to provide an alternative take on the current massively multiplayer RPGs currently doing the rounds.

Updates to [www.uo2.com](http://www.uo2.com) are becoming more frequent now (particularly the FAQ section), even though the game isn't likely to see light of day till sometime 2001. The UO2 development did, however, make an unfortunate retraction in their FAQ section:

*"We're excited about UO2 and we want to share our work with everyone. But there are drawbacks to sharing plans early, especially when those plans change. For the time being, we're going to remove player housing, mounts, the Quest of the Avatar, and the in-game guild system from our FAQ. These are features that we feel are extremely*

*important. So important, in fact, that we're not going to rush them. It takes a serious amount of time to implement, polish, balance, and bug-proof these large features - so much time that I cannot personally guarantee that these features will make the game's initial release."*

Well, as they say, FAQ's are subject to change.

With Ultima IX: Ascension shipping in an unfinished state, and the recent Ultima Online retail upgrade - UO: Renaissance - hitting the shelves sans some of its key features, Origin should be applauded for letting gamers know in advance which of the promised features won't be included in their final retail releases.

## DD Does Downunder

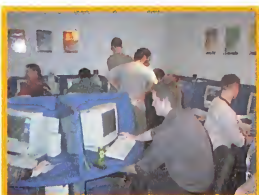
To celebrate the opening of the first Australasian Ultima Online Shard, EA promised a visit to these shores by none other than the first Sovereign of Britannia - Richard Garriott (though his close friends fondly refer to him as Lord British). With Dick's recent employment woes, we were given a most admirable trade in the form of Raph "Designer Dragon" Koster. During his tenure as lead designer of UO and UO: The Second Age, Raph gained a massive and loyal fanbase - his intimate knowledge of community based online games and dedication to the art inspiring thousands. He also scored major points for being an incredibly nice guy.

Attracting members of the UO community from around Australia, Raph offered some fascinating insights to the massively multiplayer genre at conference held at Sydney's Maritime Museum. For a transcript of his talk, point your browsers to [www.pcpowerplay.com](http://www.pcpowerplay.com).

The following day, EA held a players luncheon for Raph and a small army of the local UO community, celebrating fine food, song and of course, the opposite sex. From there it was off to an internet café where Raph nearly caused a riot by logging on to our Oceania server as Designer Dragon and handing out goodies to players from within Castle British.

The underlying success of the visit was the bringing together of the UO community - many of which had met each other for the first time. Highlighting the dynamic and colourful nature of community-driven games, the luncheon proved that there's some civility in online games yet. ■

UO devotees from all over Australia turned up for this auspicious occasion





# Legends of Multiplayer

AN OLD RPG SERIES GETS THE ONLINE KISS OF LIFE



Yes, we know what you're thinking: what the bloody hell is Might & Magic doing in Net Game News? The former is stale, crusty and distinctly old-school; the latter is sexy, new and the Future of Computer Gaming. And, up to a point, you would be right. However, New World Computing is hoping its next release will change those preconceptions.

Legends of Might & Magic has been designed as a multiplayer experience in a vein similar to Black Isle's forthcoming Neverwinter Nights. There's a strong story element to proceedings, with players encouraged to form adventuring parties and gear their play towards cooperation rather than, for example, killing each other. New World has licensed the funky Littech 2 engine to power the game. Veteran M&M players need not be told of the benefit this will have on the game's overall visual appeal.

## NGN Poll

Send your responses to [ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au) with "NGN Poll" in the subject line. Results of this month's poll to be published in PCPP#53.

In #47 we asked: "Which team-based action game are you most looking forward to - Team Fortress 2, Halo or Tribes 2? And why?" While Team Fortress 2 was the clear favourite, all three games had supporters. Here's what you had to say:

While Halo looks great, Team Fortress 2 is gonna rule. Why? Because it's set in real world with locations we can relate to, realistic weapons, different character classes, the list goes on. I can't wait!

**Mr Potato Head**

Halo, because it looks different. The reason I do not think that TF2 will be better is that you will have to get that Won software and it takes ages to download. People don't want to do this, they want to get playing straight away.

**Mitchell Slater**

For anyone who has seen the trailers to

Halo they would have to say that it looks very exciting indeed. Just the sheer diversity of tactics that you could employ would be awesome (not to mention the graphics). Team Fortress 2 would be my next choice. If you have played Counterstrike for Half-Life then you know the possibilities of the Quake2/Half-life/TF2 engine are endless. The only thing holding it back is the confined areas you get to play within.

**Brett Newman**

I am looking forward to Team Fortress 2 most because I like the realism of conventional warfare in a game. With the different classes - the backstabbing Spy to the trigger-happy Heavy Weapons Guy - there is a class to suit almost anyone. Also because it is using the Half-Life engine and has realtime voice communication built in.

**Hell Blitz**

Though many would say TF2, I would

choose Tribes 2. TF has proven very successful, but the level designs are just a weeny bit too small and restricting. Tribes has used the gameplay of TF, and with a little mix of huge Unreal levels there is more freedom. So you can snipe 400m high in the air rather than be stuck on the ground moving from side to side. Tribes 2 certainly looks like it's gonna be better.

**Xothermic**

I'm most looking forward to Team Fortress 2, just look at it! The way everything moves and looks, also the main feature: the voice communication!

**Evan Heath**

### CAN I BE CHEWIE?

Many of you showed a preference for Team Fortress 2 based on its realtime voice communication support. So, this month we ask:

**"Have you or would you like to play a game that supports realtime voice communication? If so, how does it add to the gaming experience?"**



# E3 May 11-13, 2000

DEAL-MAKING, TREND-SPOTTING, NETWORKING AT THE BIGGEST GAMES EVENT OF THE YEAR.

## www.e3expo.com

Okay, so the marketing gurus behind the big event would have you believe that the Electronic Entertainment Exposition (held annually in the United States, this year's show bringing it up to numero six) is the ultimate information solution/package that'll put your organisation light years ahead of every other in the industry. Whilst E3 probably won't have that sort of affect on most of its attendees, it is an essential event in the industry calendar that few industry members dare to miss.

If you're a loyal reader of our magazine, you'll have noticed our huge annual E3 reports and the many references leading up to and just after the big bash. Indeed, E3 is a vital event for yours truly, but what's it really all about then? An example of

marketing magic or a haven for the games industry? A great big waste of time or the most useful three days in the gaming year?

It's a bit of everything really. If you've ever been to one of those "leisure shows" held regularly in the capital cities of Australia, then you've got the basic idea. Conjure up images of effervescent sales people harping on about the wonders of the "Millennium Garlic Press" with scores of hypnotised attendees staring agape, attention subconsciously on what the bloke at the next stand is doing. Now, remove the visually monotonous interior decoration of such an event (usually various shades of grey and light blue), and replace the aisles of "Miracle Juicers" and the "Twenty-Five Piece All-In-One Steak Knife Sets" with huge lumbering game mascots, bright neon lights, massive audio systems, gargantuan video screens, persistent smoke machines and thousands of wired human beings and you're starting to get the picture. Now instead of endearing product evangelists, imagine stunningly gorgeous PR people and models vying for your attention. You've also got the games developers themselves talking those willing to listen through their own creations. Finally, for those that attend



A surprise no-show this year is Duke Nukem Forever. Just what is 3D Realms doing?

there's the chance to see demonstrations of software and hardware that are anything from a few weeks to a few years from completion.

## A Growth Industry

At its birth in 1994, the aim of expo was to get the industry together to show off each others wares. As the industry grew, so did the function of E3. Although much of the E3 experience will be shared by all of its visitors, the main purpose of E3 depends on who you are in the industry.

Some network, make deals,

buy stuff, sell stuff, pinch ideas, job-hop. For the media (including our beloved PCPP), it's the chance to see thousands of different games in development and meet with their developers. Publishers also use E3 as a vehicle to make exciting new announcements.

And it's huge. Taking up most of the LA Convention Centre in downtown Los Angeles, there's about 548,000 square feet of exhibition, giving room to about four hundred separately registered exhibitors to do show their stuff. And given that

## X-Box was at E3, but what about Bill?



## E3 2000 - A SNEAK PEEK

Here's just some of what PC PowerPlay is looking forward to at this year's E3.

- Black & White demo with Peter Molyneux
- Obi-Wan
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein by Grey Matter (ex-Xatrix kids) and id Software
- A fully featured version of Grand Prix 3 (including ALL of the tracks!)
- X-Box demonstrations
- Commandos 2
- Freelancer
- Black Isle's new RPG stuff (fingers crossed for a sequel to Planescape: Torment)
- A Richard Garriott sighting
- Industry parties
- The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences awards
- Giants by Planet Moon Studios
- Hosts of surprise announcement
- Lunch with Warren Spector





## A TYPICAL DAY AT E3.

E3 may sound like a wonderland, and well... it is. But it's also one of the most exhausting 3 days you'll spend in a year.

- Wake up and hit the alarm clock. Curse the fact that you've got be downstairs to get the bus in 15 minutes to make your first appointment at opening of the show. Swear that at tonight's party, you'll abstain from a single drop of alcohol.
- During the bus trip to the LA Convention Centre, give thanks that Aussie air is THAT much cleaner than the crud that passes for air in LA.
- Arrive at the LACC and make a mad dash to your appointed meeting place. Spend the next hour listening to a PR person talk you through the stands features. Until lunchtime, a lot of smiling and nodding takes place.
- Look at your watch, politely excuse yourself and haul jet-lagged arse to the other end of the convention centre for an interview with a gaming god. Along the way, you ponder the real benefit of this baggage commonly known as the human body.
- During interview, you shift uncomfortably to hide the loud growling noises coming from your stomach. You realise it's mid-afternoon and that nothing has entered your belly since late last night. You pick up a complimentary pretzel (salt, flour, salt, water, salt) as you bid the celebrity adieu and devour it as you run to your next appointment.
- By late afternoon, the nerve line between your legs and your brain is taken out so you can function. You will be reminded of the torture you put your body through later, and with interest.
- Soon after, your shoulders and back threaten to resign, and you wonder how you've accumulated 20kgs of press releases and CDs in your backpack. You glance through the mess and toss most of it.
- A fifteen minute opening in your schedule gives you two choices: a brief personal browse of the floorspace or a rest. Day 1 results in sightseeing, whilst Day 2 and 3 sees you pass out on the floor behind a stand and in between some indoor plants.
- As the show finishes for the day, you latch onto the back of a crowd heading towards one of LA's fancy night clubs. Once at the door, you say you're with Warren Spector and the bouncers gladly let you in. You indulge in a night of good clean (hey, spirits are clean) post-E3 fun. You thank Big Mister and Mrs Games Publisher for the night's entertainment, usually consisting of some of pop culture's elite.
- You stumble back to your hotel (or hostel) in the wee hours of the morning.
- Wake up and hit the alarm clock hard...

thousands upon thousands of people from all sectors of the industry get together under the same roof for 3-5 days of the year, some truly spectacular things are bound to happen. As the day turns into night, everybody gets together in and around LA to have a gay ol' time.

Truly, E3 marks three days in the year where the gaming geeks take over Los Angeles.

March Stepnik

Our reaction at meeting Peter Molyneux.



# CHARTS



Charts supplied by  
Electronics Boutique

THIS MONTH	WEEKS IN	GAME/ PUBLISHER
1	2	<b>SOLDIER OF FORTUNE</b> ACTIVISION
2	2	<b>STAR TREK: ARMADA</b> ACTIVISION
3	11	<b>THE SIMS</b> ELECTRONIC ARTS
4	6	<b>C&amp;C TIBERIAN SUN: FIRESTORM</b> ELECTRONIC ARTS
5	25	<b>AGE OF EMPIRES II</b> MICROSOFT
6	1	<b>STAR WARS: Force Commander</b> PLAYCORP
7	2	<b>NEED FOR SPEED: Porsche 2000</b> ELECTRONIC ARTS
8	4	<b>MIGHT &amp; MAGIC VIII</b> JACK OF ALL GAMES
9	3	<b>MAJESTY</b> HASBRO
10	20	<b>HALF-LIFE Adrenaline Pack</b> DATAFLOW
11	3	<b>MESSIAH</b> INTERPLAY
12	5	<b>BATTLEZONE II</b> ACTIVISION
13	1	<b>THIEF II</b> OZISOFT
14	6	<b>FINAL FANTASY VIII</b> OZISOFT
15	20	<b>UNREAL TOURNAMENT</b> GT INTERACTIVE
16	3	<b>TA KINGDOMS: Iron Plague</b> GT INTERACTIVE
17	1	<b>GUNSHIP!</b> HASBRO
18	21	<b>HALF-LIFE: Opposing Force</b> DATAFLOW
19	15	<b>PHARAOH</b> DATAFLOW
20	16	<b>PLANESCAPE TORMENT</b> INTERPLAY



# PCPP HITS THE

FROM ONE BEEFY BLOKE WITH A GUN TO, WELL... ANOTHER BEEFY BLOKE WITH A GUN, THE PAGES PROVIDE YOU WITH AS MUCH TEARY-EYED NOSTALGIA AS THEY DO FOR US. SHAME

## YOU LOVE US!

To celebrate reaching the Big 50, we asked you which issue of PCPP occupies that special place in your heart. Here's a selection of your responses:

Steve Walley's reasons for liking our first issue are the same as why we started the mag in the first place: "PCPP#1 was the first of many great issues of a locally produced gaming mag, with good reading and a great cover CD. My only concern after buying it was, 'Will this last?' It did. Thank you!"

The brilliantly named Trevor de Vroome is likewise a Quake fan: "My all time favourite PCPP is #45. It revolutionised the gaming industry with the release of the fiercest gaming competition ever - Quake 3 Arena vs Unreal Tournament."

Adrian Marriott is another old-school kinda guy: "My favourite issue would have to be PCPP#1! It was the first and best PC magazine I read, it was Australian and I've been reading it ever since."

PCPP#42 also found the favour of Cameron Jones, but for a different reason: "The reason I chose this fabulous issue is because System Shock 2 was reviewed in it! Even though my machine is ancient I still love it, just for the screenshocks (sic) and the website. It is the best game ever! Also the Read Error segment was pretty funny."

Our preview of Age of Empires II in PCPP#41 put a smile on BlackAce's face: "After I had enjoyed AOE so much, I just couldn't help worrying that AOE2 might just

issue #1



issue #2



issue #3



issue #4



issue #5



issue #11



issue #12



issue #13



issue #14



issue #15



issue #21



issue #22



issue #23



issue #24



issue #25



issue #31



issue #32



issue #33



issue #34



issue #35



issue #41



issue #42



issue #43



issue #44



issue #45





# THE BIG FIVE-O

THE HISTORY OF PC POWERPLAY IS THE HISTORY OF COMPUTER GAMES. WE HOPE THESE TWO AT THE ARTWORK HASN'T IMPROVED AS MUCH AS THE GAMES... ENJOY THE NEXT FIFTY!



be released to make more money. Anyway, I was just so relieved to find that this was not the case and that AOE2 was a damn sweet game."

PCPP is only as good as the games it reviews, according to Damien Melville: "Being an eternal Half-Life fan, I would say PCPP#31. It that had the review that convinced me to buy it."

PCPP#45 gets Dez Wang's endorsement. "I would have to say that issue #45 was my fave, as it gave me the best possible statement about Quake 3: Arena, BUY IT NOW."

PCPP#47 satisfied Damien Maier's hunger for the bigger picture: "I have to say PCPP#47, with its interesting look at censorship and rating of computer games, as well as a fantastic rundown of the Game of the Year for 1999, made it a very entertaining as well as informative read."

Trent Yarwood appreciates the simpler things: "Although, I haven't really got a favourite issue, I think that PCPP#18 and PCPP#30 were milestones because of the increase in the number of pages - even better value!"

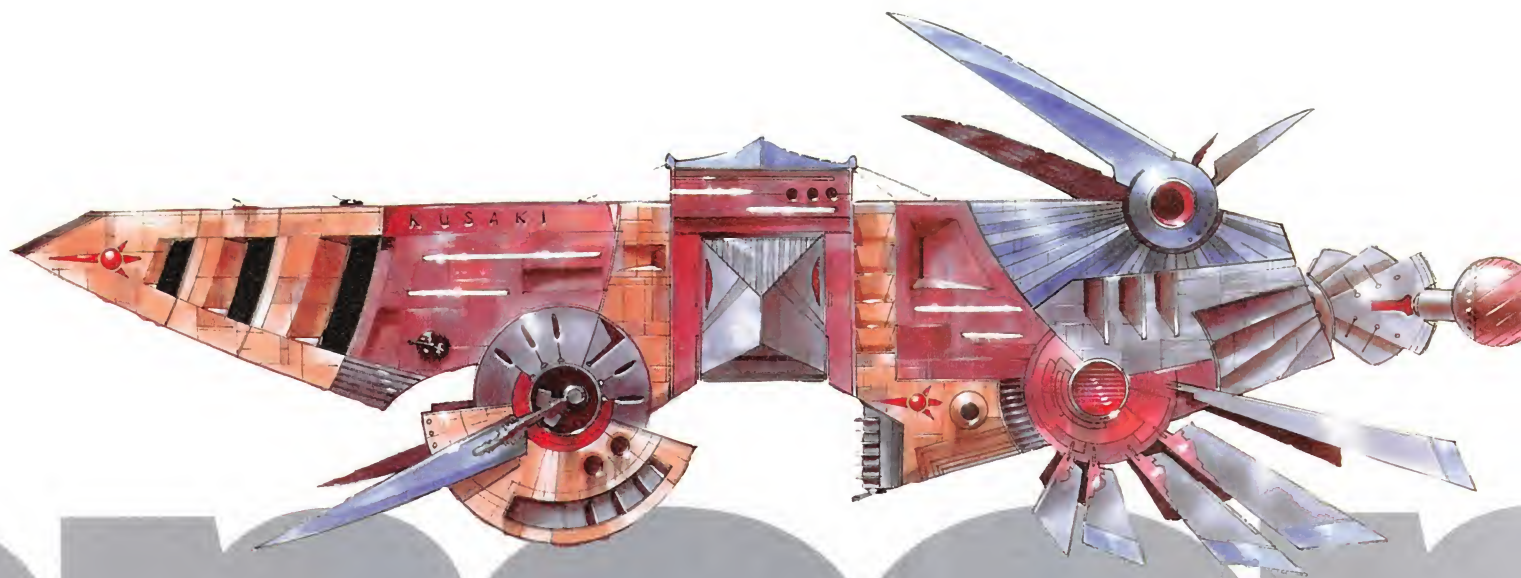
Andrew Tan was a big fan of former Editor Ben Mansill: "My favourite issue would definitely be PCPP#45, as it was the last appearance of Ben Mansill. He will always be the most loved and remembered editor of PCPP. Sob, sob."

We'll leave the last word to Drew Foster: "I like all the issues of PC PowerPlay. They are funny, interesting, up-to-date and they look great. Just keep up the good work."









# Freelancer

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR GAMING



## AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS ROBERTS

**A**fter creating the whole Space Combat Opera with the Wing Commander series at Origin (after having picked up his programming skills in his native England), Chris Roberts is currently working on his most ambitious project yet. A sequel of sorts to his Privateer games, the interest in Freelancer peaked after a rather modest demo at last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo. His company, Digital Anvil, has also recently released the fantastic Starlancer (PCPP #49 93%) - on which he served as executive producer - and is working on a number of other projects including Loose Cannon and Conquest: Frontier Wars. On the eve of E3 2000, PCPP called Chris at his Austin, Texas studio to shoot the breeze.

So how about this then: Wing Commander is to Privateer, as Starlancer will be to... Freelancer?

Yes. Starlancer will be the Wing Commander of Freelancer's Privateer.

Given this and your work with Freelancer - what has it meant to the development of Starlancer, in terms of a cohesive game universe?

We were trying to make sure that they existed in the same universe, and we came up with a story that they both worked and fit inside. We

actually did that really early in the development of Starlancer, because we were in development of Freelancer before we started on Starlancer.

**So how long ago was Freelancer started?**

Basically we started Freelancer when we started the company, which was in March of '97. Ideas for Freelancer were noodling around well before then though, because I was going to do another Privateer at Origin. Some of the key staff currently on Freelancer actually came with me from Origin, and these were the guys that were all going to be working on the Privateer there with me. So we were thinking about Freelancer in '95, but we only really got around to it in March of '97 and we've been working on it ever since.

### Digital story telling

It's surprising how relatively little we - the public - know about Freelancer save that it's "Chris' next Privateer/Elite style" game. Given this, how has the game changed (if at all) over the course of its development since its inception?

I think it's grown - [laughs] - obviously it's taken a while. We had a pretty ambitious vision, but some things with the technology have come along - like hardware acceleration - that just

allowed us to do a lot more with the visuals. Originally we were going to use a combination of cutscenes - live action - like a Wing Commander III or IV or Prophecy. During the course, technology got to the level that we felt like we could do convincing story scenes inside the engine and have really great emotion with digital characters. So we switched over to that and made it 3D all the way through for the story telling and the game part of Freelancer. That's probably the biggest thing that's changed.

**So that's why you chose to ditch the live action scenes in go for CG instead in Starlancer as well?**

Yes. One of the things is that to do live action right, you have to spend a lot of money. We spent a fair amount of money on Starlancer, but not as much as we did on Wing Commander IV. And we didn't really want to go out and do it half-arsed. We felt like we could do some more interesting and fantastical stuff with the CG. And the other thing was that we could probably make the look of it be more similar to what you're seeing when you're actually flying around. That's the reason we did it for Starlancer and Freelancer. Since everything is in the same engine (in particular with Freelancer), it just helps with the suspension ►



**"I CAN PUT A DIGITAL CHARACTER IN A SCENE AND I CAN HAVE HIM BE SAD OR BE HAPPY OR LAUGH OR CRY"**



**The Four Houses of Humanity rule the known universe. Architecture in different regions varies greatly thanks to the cultural singularity of each house.**

of disbelief - you don't feel the cut when you go from playing it in 3D to seeing a flick playback.

And I think it is quite disconcerting. At the time I did Wing Commander III and IV, it was the best answer for storytelling because there was emotion and subtlety that an actor can portray that you just can't get with crude animation. Back then you couldn't get it doing it inside the game system. So I think live action was right for that time. I think now - with motion capture and facial capture and some of the stuff we can do - I can put a digital character in a scene and I can have him be sad or be happy or laugh or cry, or I can do emotion with him that I couldn't do before. Okay, it's not quite as fluid as doing live action, but it's pretty damn close. On top of that it's in the game engine so it feels like it's seamless between the story and playing the game.

People view the live action stuff used in the later Wing Commander games with mixed opinions. Do you have any regrets bringing a piece of Hollywood to the games industry?

No. I think there are a lot of good things to come from film production that the game industry can use and learn from. I don't think that if you can make movies you can make games

though - I mean they're different - but there are a lot of similarities in terms of sound design, in terms of the texture, and how a scene feels.

Movies are light years ahead of where games are in this respect because they really think about it - they really focus on ambiances, they put wallow tracks in (which is people talking, noise in the background). There can be 120 tracks to a scene in a movie that build up the feeling of that scene being real. And if you heard what the footage sounded like when they captured it with production sound - it's like Star Trek! It's all a wooden set, right, and you hear the actors creaking around on the floorboards, but you go into the sound thing and all of a sudden it's "clunk clunk clunk" instead of creaking and it sounds like metal, and the doors swoosh open. A level of design like that helps creating the reality that we strive for in games.

Also, things that are going to become more important with games is a sense of composition - how the pictures and the shots look. And the lighting, too. Lighting is a big deal in films - it helps create mood and a whole bunch of other things. We're just starting to see some games using lighting. In Starlancer there's some lighting, in Freelancer there's even more - where

## What's down at Da

Next to Freelancer, Digital Anvil is working on two other titles at the moment.



### Loose Cannon

With the guy behind Origin's smashing action Crusader series Tony Zurovec at the helm, you can expect a lot of visceral thrills from Loose Cannon. Combining the tactics and strategy of the Crusader series with a rich storyline, upgradeable weapons and a richly detailed world, players progress through missions on foot or behind the wheel.



### Conquest: Frontier Wars

A 3D realtime strategy game set in deep space. Players will be able to play one of three unique races. This impressive looking game features the usual trappings of galactic domination-based warfare, complete with resources to manage, technologies to research and develop and a complex diplomacy system.

we don't have any ambient light in Freelancer - we just have it all source lit from a Sun or a bounce from a planet, for example.

Using some of those film techniques - from some of my experiences and other people's experience here - and applying them to the game we make the game sound and look better. At that point then, it's up to us to make it a really good game. But what the film stuff is doing is helping us pull ourselves into that world of fiction better and make it more realistic.

### What are your thoughts on Homeworld then, and its strong cinematic presentation?

I was really impressed with they did with Homeworld, in terms of telling the story. It definitely gave me the ambience of a sort of big space opera, so I thought they did a really good job. I was actually really happily surprised by their ingame cinematics - the game engine and the cinematic stuff - it all told the story very well. The only thing I felt it lacked was a sense of character - some personalities on the ship or some characters to take you through the story. They really did a good job of giving you that epic cinematic feel, and I think it's going to be taken further. It was definitely a step in the right direction.





## Persistent worlds

**You've mentioned that Freelancer is going to be a single player experience to start off with, then it'll evolve into a massively multiplayer game. How's that going to work?**

Basically, we set out to design a massively multiplayer game and a single player game all at once, and ended up realising that those were two massive tasks and that they don't mutually co-exist. What's really good for a single player story isn't necessarily great for a multiplayer story - the storytelling experience is different. So we split it up, and we decided that the first iteration and release of Freelancer was going to be a single player game, have a linear story, and would have a mode where you can have up to sixteen of your friends fly with you in the universe. And then, we're going to do a massively multiplayer version where you can fly with thousands of your friends, and that's more about sides and houses and clans than it is necessarily about saving the princess from the Death Star. The single player story is going to set the scene, introduce the characters and the universe that will feature in the massively multiplayer Freelancer. Hopefully players will want to spend time and exist in that universe, and run across some of the characters we set up in the

singleplayer game, and be fighting for one of the causes we set up in the singleplayer game.

**Will it be a persistent game universe?**  
Most definitely!

**That must have been a huge undertaking to develop both simultaneously.**

Oh yes. As I said earlier, the story you tell for a multiplayer game is inherently different than the story you tell for a single player one. Part of the impact of a singleplayer story is that it affects you directly - it's your brother that gets killed, it's your love that gets lost, it all happens to you. You can't be that specific when you try to have a story that affects thousands of people. Otherwise, you get online with your friend, and say "Hey, I saved the princess!" and he says "Hey wait a minute, I saved the princess too!" "You did that? Hey, I thought I did that!" It wrecks the experience.

So for a massively multiplayer game's story you have the big epic story that is going around the players, and the player contributes to help achieve the story, but he doesn't become the hero that saves the galaxy. This is because everybody wants to be a hero and you can't have thousands of people being that same person. So it becomes

more "I'm fighting for this cause" or "I'm fighting for that cause", or "I discovered that fact or something". They're inherently different kinds of story. They're both really cool, but the multiplayer experience isn't as compelling as one that is deliberately for one player - where you can heighten some of the emotional screws.

That's my experience, and that's why we split them apart. The kind of story you tell massively multiplayer is always going to be different to one that is singleplayer.

**So which are you more interested in developing? Singleplayer or massively multiplayer?**

Both. Here's the way I look at it: if you want to tell a really emotionally impactful story - something that makes someone cry or laugh or tears at their heart the way a film does - it's going to have to be a single player experience. But, if you want to create a world that is so detailed and so cool and so compelling that people want to adventure around inside that world, then that's a massively multiplayer experience, because that's just going to be cooler than any world you do for a singleplayer.

One is really world creation, and one is really story telling. There can be elements of both, obviously, in each of them, but those are the two





**"WITH GAMES THERE'S A MILLION DIFFERENT GAME STYLES THAT MAYBE NO ONE HAS COME ACROSS YET."**

primary stands. I find both of them pretty fascinating, and I want to tinker around with both.

**When you say story telling, do you think of it as telling for entertainment's sake or as a tool for growing/learning experience?**

Primarily entertainment. But at some point if I could tell a story that makes someone think, then that would be good. I want to do what you can do with the best movies, which is make someone laugh and cry, and give themselves to that story. With some of the games we're close to doing that, but we don't touch the emotions the same way that the best films can do. When we can touch the emotions the same way films do, we'll have matured as an artform. Eliciting those types of responses from the people playing a game, I think, is fantastic. I find that very attractive and interesting, and that's where I'm headed for now.

### Future possibilities

**What games does Chris Roberts play when he's not developing Freelancer?**

I play a fair amount of RTS stuff - so it's been Age of Kings for me recently. Other fun games are multiplayer cooperative stuff, like Rogue

Spear. I really enjoyed Grim Fandango. In terms of time though, multiplayer AoK and Rogue Spear had me. On the console side I played a lot of Metal Gear Solid when it came out. I really responded to that - I liked that combination of storytelling inside the game engine.

**What is it about your job that excites you and fuels your passion for game creation?**

The thing is, several times I get to the point where I'm like "You know, I feel kind of bored, what am I going to do that's new?" Every time I feel like that the technology changes and it allows me to play with a different experience that I couldn't have before. I'm passionate about telling stories, involving people in worlds, and using the technology really well to do this.

And the fact that the technology changes all the time is pretty exciting because it's almost like the language of this entertainment medium is being written as we go along, and we're the people that get to innovate and push it. In a lot of other entertainment mediums it's difficult to do that, because they've been around for a lot longer and there's a language, a syntax, already defined. Whereas with games there's a million different game styles that maybe no one has come across yet.

**You really think it's that vast?**

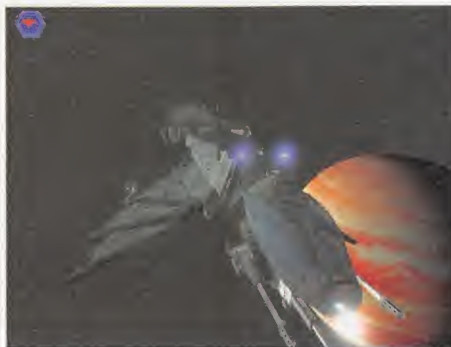
I think our industry has a lot more variety and potential that is as yet untapped. It's got a long way to go - we're nowhere close to the maturity of businesses like film, TV or music.

The games I'm making now are very different than games I could make three or four years ago - and that's very cool. There's also something exciting about that sense of discovery.

**So what frustrates you about making games?**

The fact now that games take longer and longer to make and they cost more and more. This is mainly because every year or two or whenever you make a game, everybody expects it to be bigger and better than the last game that was made. To me, I look at it very much like this: in the film world, if you made a two hour film this year, next year they'll expect a three hour film, then a four hour film, and the year after that, a five hour film. Obviously it takes time and money to make those longer film, and that's kinda what's happening in the games business: everybody wants it to be bigger and better and more complicated than last time. So a lot of times we end up chasing our tails that way, rather than just concentrating on making the game better, the





Freelancer's incredible ship designs represent a welcome change from the somewhat dull models in similar games. The birdlike ships (lower right) show a welcome organic influence to their designs.

story better or refining the art of it.

I'm also frustrated with the issues of PC technology as well. Not everybody's videocard driver works the same way, and there are all these technical glitches that get in the way of the experience. That makes things a bit more limiting.

**So the X-Box must be a tantalising prospect. Are you developing for it?**

Yes, we're going to be developing for it. We're pretty excited by it because we like the PC architecture but not the problems inherent with it that I just mentioned. X-Box takes the good things with the PC architecture, fixes a lot of the bad things, and then enhances it all by a factor of ten. There's something about having a gaming machine that is that powerful and is pretty easy to develop on. That's exciting for us. We're interested in doing stuff for PS2 and other systems, but the X-Box has a certain allure because we know that architecture pretty well.

**There is some concern that the 8GB storage drive in the X-Box will encourage publishers to release unfinished games knowing that users will be able to download patches from the net. How do you feel about gamers purchasing unfinished game code?**

I think they're absolutely cheated on. One of the reasons I left EA and started Digital Anvil and hooked up with Microsoft was I wanted the time to do it right. Microsoft's probably going "Hey, wait a minute, this is a bit more time than we thought you were going to take", but at EA, definitely, the pressure was there to get it out and get it out before it's ready. Which is probably what happened with Ultima Ascension. To work on something for two or three years and get it out like that - that's just sad because it's really a labour of love.

If you want to be making money you'd be in the internet business starting a dot.com company. It's all technically very simple, but it's not really creatively rewarding. You're in this business because you really want to make great games and tell great stories, and to have that compromised to get it out early for an arbitrary quarter because it's good for the stock holders is very frustrating.

At the same time, many publishers simply can't afford to give the developers the time to get it right. It's a very delicate issue.

**So we'll be watching Freelancer very closely, Chris. Thanks for your time.**

[Laughs] Not a problem. See you guys at E3. ■

## 30 years in the life of Chris Roberts

**1970** - Born in Manchester, England.

**1984** - Plays Elite for the first time on a BBC Micro. Cited as one of his most influential game experiences.

**1987** - Three best seller games: Match Day, Wiz Adore and Stryker's Run in England.

**1988** - Moves to the US and joins Origin Systems. Releases Times of Lore - another bestseller

**1990** - Bad Blood, a post-apocalyptic RPG, hits the shelves.



**1990** - Wing Commander, the space combat simulator, is unleashed upon the gaming public. An instant classic (PCPP's 15th best game of all time), the Wing Commander series did for computer games what Star Wars did for cinema.

**1992** - Wing Commander II released. Better than Wing Commander.



**1992** - Privateer, a game based "loosely" on Elite makes it way to the PC. Is considered by many as infinitely better.

**1993** - Strike Commander, a flight jet action sim with story bits is released. Lots of people buy it and Chris makes Origin/EA very happy.

**1994** - Wing Commander III. Stars Mark Hamil. Combines 3D space combat with live action cutscenes.

**1995** - Wing Commander IV goes live. Doesn't have big fluffy cats in it. As a result, popularity wanes.

**1996** - Privateer 2 released. Chris hands the reigns over to his brother, Erin Roberts for this one. Stars a Pommy git.

**1996** - Leaves Origin Systems and forms Digital Anvil. Based in Austin, Texas, DA signs a publishing deal with Microsoft.

**1997** - Work on Freelancer and Starlancer begins.

**1999** - Wing Commander the movie is released. It, er, makes it to video very quickly.

**1999** - Chris demos Freelancer behind closed doors. Jaws drops and many a "Game of E3" award is given to Freelancer.

**2000** - Starlancer is released. Developed primarily by Erin Roberts.





# diablo II

**BATTLE.NET BETA TEST REPORT**





## YOU JUST CAN'T KEEP A GOOD DEMON DOWN. MARCH STEPNIK GETS HIS SWORD DIRTY ON BATTLE.NET

It was during the first part of March that Blizzard announced that they were holding a public beta test for the multiplayer side of the sequel to their quirky action RPG game, Diablo. Now given that Diablo was the first "roleplaying game" (sitting firmly on the action/adventure side of the scale, of course) that sold over a million copies, we'll skip any long-winded introduction to the phenomenon, okay? Anyway, chances are that most of you succumbed to its incredibly addictive gameplay long, long ago.

So it's hardly a surprise that the Battle.net Beta Test registration servers were swamped with thousands of keen fans hoping for a chance to taste the upcoming sequel before its release. The Beta Test was planned over two phases, and brought about primarily to test Battle.net (Blizzard's free multiplayer service), test compatibility, find and quash bugs and last-but-not-least, fine tune and balance Blizzard's famous simple and beautiful gameplay. A US-only first-phase was scheduled, with a global, second phase stress-test following soon after.

Given that all of us here at PCPP were Diablo addicts at one point in time, we simply couldn't wait for the second phase. Thanks Blizzard and

the lovely Sonia for ever so readily obliging our growing impatience...

### Act I

Our Diablo II Beta CD arrived the following highlighted message:

"The Diablo II Battle.net Beta includes just a final portion of the final game and is playable only through Battle.net. While you can play any of the five character classes completely through the first act of the game, Acts II, III and IV are not included in the Beta. Also excluded from the Battle.net Beta are many other of the features of the full game such as single player mode, multi-player mode, multi-player LAN games, 24 minutes of cinematic sequences, dozens of skills, spells, and hundreds of thousands of weapons, armour and items."

So we get only one quarter of the final game, it's multiplayer only (that is, played on the Battle.net servers, though it can be played like the singleplayer game - without other players), and lacks a bunch of the features to be included in the final version.

### It's huuuge

Well bloody hell! The first act of Diablo II is about as big as Diablo in all of its entirety. Set in

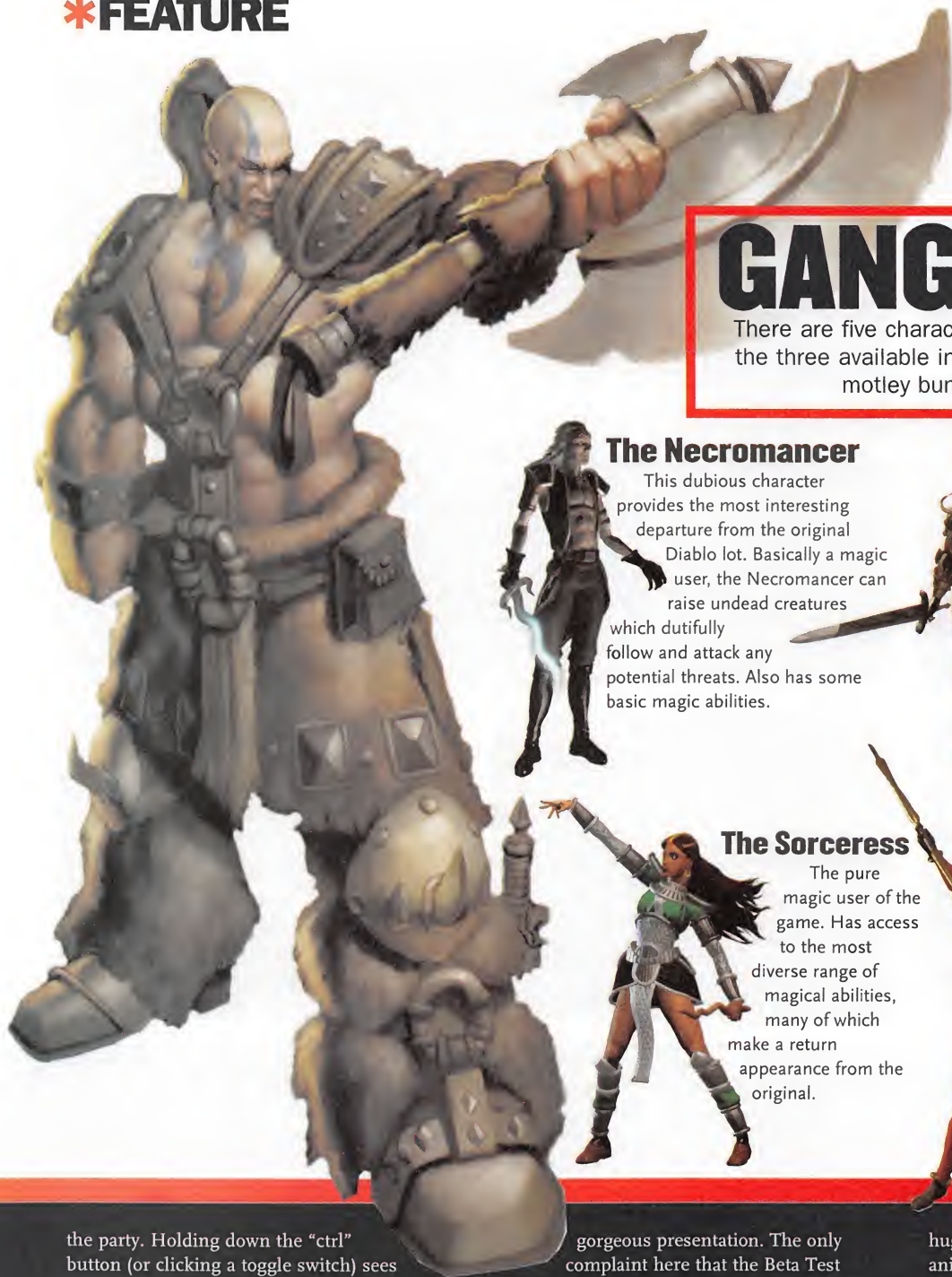
the countryside around a caravan that has indefinitely setup camp, Act I is a fantastic segue between the characters and past events of Tristram (the setting of Diablo) and the future direction of Diablo II. There are plenty of hints throughout Act I of bigger things to come.

The camp is larger than the, er, town of Tristram, though remains entirely familiar - a host of characters situated within it are there to help you out in your adventures. They repair your equipment, sell you their wares, and indulge in the odd bit of gossip from time to time. Just like the first, really.

Once you leave the confines of the camp, the scale of Diablo II really kicks in. Featuring vast expanses between the various dungeons and crypts, Diablo II's countryside really opens up the world of Diablo. Rather than imparting the sense of saving a backyard from a fate worse than death (c'mon, Tristram was tiny), Diablo II feels immense. It seems as if there really is a world out there to save, and to explore. And the passage of time and space will be further expressed by taking players to vastly different environments in the later acts when DII goes live.

As players have far greater distances to traverse, Blizzard has added a new run option to ►





## The Barbarian

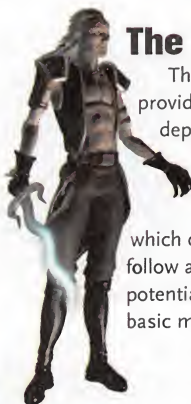
The pure, no questions asked lumbering slab of meat. As the Barbarian becomes more skilled, the access to more devastating physical attacks increases.

# GANG OF FIVE

There are five character classes in Diablo II, diversifying the three available in Diablo. Here's a brief squiz at the motley bunch of hardened warriors.

## The Necromancer

This dubious character provides the most interesting departure from the original Diablo lot. Basically a magic user, the Necromancer can raise undead creatures which dutifully follow and attack any potential threats. Also has some basic magic abilities.



## The Paladin

This character combines the brutish strength of the Barbarian with basic magic abilities. Most notable are his fantastic aura skills, which can protect or heal players with a certain radius of this honorable warrior.



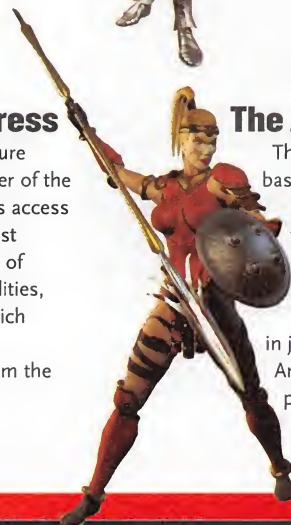
## The Sorceress

The pure magic user of the game. Has access to the most diverse range of magical abilities, many of which make a return appearance from the original.



## The Amazon

This dexterous character is based on the Rogue of Diablo. Fans of the Rogue will be well chuffed to know that the Amazon can use all of the weapons available in D2, rather than proficient in just a few. However, the Amazon is better suited to projectile weapons. This is reflected in the Amazon's skill set.



the party. Holding down the "ctrl" button (or clicking a toggle switch) sees the player haul arse double-time - perfect for escaping those skirmishes where your health orb long ago lost its integrity, or reducing travel times.

For those lazy sods that don't like to make use of their legs (use 'em or lose 'em people), a new teleportation system has also been introduced. Simply activate the gates scattered throughout the wilderness areas and you've got instant travel back to camp and other areas already visited. It's dead easy. Fear not that the scrolls of Town Portal have been dispensed with. These venerable tools are present in Diablo II and still delectably useful. And loading times between areas in Diablo II are virtually instantaneous.

## Lush

Diablo II's graphics have also been tweaked, however minutely. Pyrotechnic and lighting displays are used with far more artistic flair in the sequel (and abundance, it must be said), adding a fantastic touch to the magicks of the game. Blizzard has also added parallax scrolling to Diablo II, adding greatly to its already

gorgeous presentation. The only complaint here that the Beta Test version of Diablo II only allowed a display resolution of 640 x 480. Great for low-end users and those with smaller monitors, Diablo II can look rather disconcerting on bigger monitors. Blizzard has always created games that can be played on a broad spectrum of systems, so that's where the justification likely lies. Though where's the support for higher-end users? Worse is news that Diablo II may ship with the 640 x 480 resolution being the maximum.

## Bigger beasts

The larger scale of Diablo II can be constantly seen in the monsters themselves. The Beta reprises many of the favourites from the original, like the Goatmen, the Hell-Bent-On-Leather S&M Mistresses, the Fallen, and perennial favourites, the zombies and skeletons (although plenty of new creatures are planned for the final release). Creatures vary in size, from the mitely and pesky Fallen to the huge and lumbering Gargantuan Beasts, which are quite easily thrice your size. Pity though, felling these particular furry creatures feels criminal - they seem far more

huggable than menacing. As expected, the animations are superbly grotesque (with the exception of, naturally, the Gargantuan Beast), adding plenty of character and a suitably dark atmosphere to the game.

Veteran players will be pleased to know that there've been some tweaks to the enemy characteristics. For example, packs of The Fallen are headed up by a Shaman figure. Choose to ignore it, and your hack n' slash attempts will be in vain - the Shaman can resurrect fallen Fallen. In such cases, seek out the guy with the funky head gear and dispose of him first.

## Skillz

So far, Blizzard has brought us more of the stuff that made the first so addictive, and then chucked all that into a bigger gaming world. For the scores of minor tweaks that Blizzard has made to Diablo, there's one major addition to Diablo II that has got even the most jaded Diablo fan excited all over again. The skill system.

Let's face it. Diablo got pretty dull in a hurry. The addictive nature of constant rewards and frequent character development (character stats points) worked well, but never elevated the



## Collector's Edition



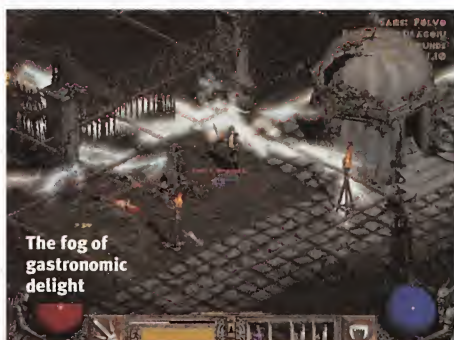
At launch, Blizzard are going to be offering a special edition of Diablo II for the fans.

The box will include:

- Diablo II on four CD ROMs
- A 24-minute Diablo II cinematic on DVD in wide-screen letter box format
- A Diablo II soundtrack with 70 minutes of music

- The Wizards of the Coast pencil-and-paper role-playing game based on the AD&D rule set
- A manual signed by the development team.

Quantities of the collectors edition are strictly limited. Orders can be placed at [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com), and will be available from some retailers in the US. If you see one in Australian stores, snap it up quick.



**"CREATURES VARY IN SIZE, FROM THE MITELY AND PESKY FALLEN TO THE HUGE AND LUMBERING GARGANTUAN BEASTS, WHICH ARE QUITE EASILY THRICE YOUR SIZE."**

characters beyond generic mediocrity. Characters had either x strength/magic/dexterity points or y strength/magic/dexterity points.

The new skill system works to develop unique and individual characters in the Diablo II world. Upon a level advancement, each of the five character classes in Diablo II is given 5 character points to distribute amongst the traditional stats (exactly like the first) and 1 skill point to distribute amongst that character's skill set (new!). Each skill set varies between the characters chosen, and contains active and passive types. Active are those that must be actively used (can be bound to the right mouse button), and passive are automatic. The Barbarian's skills are exclusively physical, and increase the power and effectiveness (and even types) of attack. The Paladin has touches of this as well as aura effect skills, like mass heal or mass protect. The Necromancer (a popular choice of alter-ego, ew... gross) can raise the dead or hurl other magic spells, while the Sorceress' skills are almost exclusively magical. The Amazon's skills allow her to do far more impressive things with her bow - like five shot attacks - or more practical passive ones, like dodge.

The skill system adds a fascinating new aspect

to character development. Should one choose to specialise in a few skills and thus cultivate their potency, or should one become a jack-of-all-trades, master of none? If anything, this system greatly increases the replayability of Diablo II.

### Battle.net Mk. II

Of course, you can't have Diablo without Battle.net. Its interface has received a relatively minor facelift in accordance to evolution, making it far easier to find out basic info about other characters. Unfortunately, the Guild system that was promised has been dropped from the final release. Blizzard do, however, assert that it will find its way into the system somewhere down the track. Whether as part of a retail expansion pack or a free downloadable patch, is at present unknown.

Setting up a game of Diablo II is a straightforward affair and employs a system similar to that of the first. The changes worth mentioning include placing restrictions on the level of players that can enter a game you can create (preventing 40 Level Warlords from wreaking havoc on your Level 6 Necromancer, for example), as well as the absolutely brilliant

Hardcore Mode. Hardcore mode on Battle.net starts and ends with your character's one life, literally. Once death befalls your beloved character, he or she is permanently deleted from the B.net servers. Most definitely a more thrilling challenge to seasoned players, and one that commanded deep respect - especially at higher levels - over the course of the beta test.

### It's almost here

Without a doubt, Diablo revolutionised PC roleplaying. It brought the genre to the masses, and paved the way for greater acceptance of the humble RPG by game publishers and consumers alike. However, Diablo II is hardly revolutionary. They've taken the basic proponents of the original, had a long hard think about how they could be bettered, and then tweaked the formula ever so delicately. Finally, they just added lots more stuff. And bless 'em for that, and that alone.

Judging from the Beta Test, Diablo II will be just as addictive and enjoyable than the first. If anything, it should prove to be even more captivating.

Rejoice, ladies and gentleman. Diablo II is almost here. Wanna buy some gear? ■





# DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

DUKE RETURNS FOR  
ANOTHER BOUT WITH  
DR PROTON.  
BUT HOW LONG WILL  
WE HAVE TO WAIT!?







Character models are exactly detailed.



Movie references (and other Easter Eggs) abound.



## DETAILS

- **Genre:** Firstperson World Saving
- **Players:** 1-Multi
- **Developer:** 3D Realms
- **Publisher:** GT Interactive
- **Due:** "When it's done"

**\*** From humble beginnings, great things arise. The ancient adage has particular relevance when applied to the Duke Nukem series; a trilogy which began, in 1991, with a rather mediocre side scrolling platform shooter. Further evolution of the series culminated in the production of the most technically advanced 3D shooter of its era.

Way back in 1996, the inaugural issue of PC PowerPlay featured Duke Nukem 3D splashed prominently across its cover. 3D Realm's pipe-bombing, arse-kicking, stripper-tipping extravaganza was still a month from release, but the downloadable demo succeeded in whipping the gaming community into a frenzy. As it happens, that frenzied reaction was more than

justified - the retail version of Duke Nukem 3D proved to be one of the greatest firstperson shooters of all time. And Duke himself succeeded in becoming one of the industry's best loved game personalities.

### Shake it, baby

Four years and 49 issues later, devoted Duke fans the world over are still patiently waiting for Duke Nukem Forever, the next installment of a series that has spanned a decade. To say that the game's protracted development process has been tumultuous would be an understatement.

1998 saw 3D Realms' unexpected abandonment of the antiquated Quake 2 engine in favour of Epic's technically impressive, cutting edge, Unreal engine. The reasons behind this drastic change were manifold - the Unreal engine's ability to

smoothly model large outdoor environments granted 3D Realms much greater flexibility in designing game levels. The engine's 3D modeling capabilities also allowed 3D Realms to implement a skeletal animation system for all character models within the game. And the Unreal engine's comprehensive and intuitive toolsets were relatively easy to use, especially in comparison to id's complicated merchandise. Finally, the Unreal engine was capable of producing spectacular visuals that the Quake 2 engine couldn't hope to match. Obviously, this latter advantage

excitement surrounds Duke Nukem Forever's development, very little is known about this enigmatic game. The dissemination of specific information on Duke Nukem Forever's gameplay attributes has been hampered by an almost total media blackout on the part of 3D Realms. The team's policy regarding the disclosure of crucial game information recently came under scrutiny with the company's decision not to exhibit Duke Nukem Forever, either in demo or video form, at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). President of 3D Realms and

## "3D REALMS PIPE-BOMBING, ARSE KICKING, STRIPPER TIPPING EXTRAVAGANZA"

was diminished slightly with the subsequent release of Quake 3 Arena, but Epic's masterpiece remains a technically and economically viable engine choice to this day.

### G-14 classified

Although widespread

Project Manager of Duke Nukem Forever, George Broussard, was quick to justify the decision, emphatically stating that the company has the best interests of gamers in mind. He is confident that Duke Nukem Forever will be one of the best games ever, and



## Damn, I'm lookin' good

Even when Duke Nukem Forever was created using the Quake 2 engine, it was a very swish looking game. As these screenshots will attest, the game's graphics surpassed that of every other FPS in existence. And, from the Unreal engine screenshots, it seems more than likely that history will repeat itself.



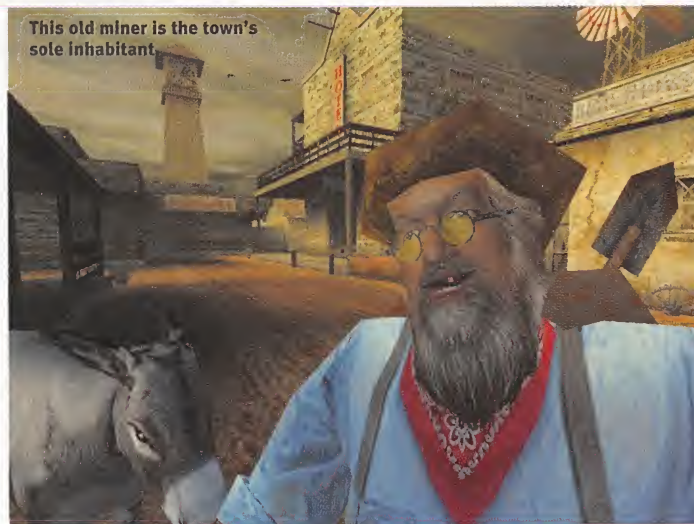
Very swish.

certainly the most interactive. As such, the longterm goal of 3D Realms has been to retain a degree of surprise that the average gamer hasn't experienced since the days of Doom. "We hope the die hard fans out there understand that we're just trying to protect the game's experience" Broussard said. "When they play the game it will be fresh and new and they will say "wow" every 10 seconds. They will thank us for not spoiling the game for them".

While this unprecedented attitude on the part of a developer does make the job of game journalists far more difficult, we here at PCPP are admittedly pleased by this radical diversion from the standard operating procedure adopted by the majority of developers. In an industry



Vega's red light district will be a game highlight.



This old miner is the town's sole inhabitant.

where products are the subject of excessive marketing hype, and crucial content information is often aired to all and sundry years before the product's release, the stance taken by 3D Realms is encouraging. Such a policy can only work to the advantage of gamers in the long run, and may signal a return to the days of yore; when players were actually surprised by in-game features and events. However, whether or not other developers will adopt similar procedures remains to be seen.

### Old adversaries return

In contrast to the almost obsessive zeal with which 3D Realms has restricted the outflow of information concerning the game's weapons, characters and enemy types, the company has

been surprisingly forthcoming in revealing aspects of its plot and location. Perhaps, because story lines are seldom as important in games of this type than they are in adventure or roleplaying titles. Duke Nukem Forever will be set in Las Vegas and its environs, and the player will have occasion to visit famous landmarks like the Hoover Dam, Grand Canyon, the Vegas casino strip and the infamous Area 51. Duke's nemesis, Dr Proton (whom fans may recognise as the bad guy from the original Duke Nukem action games) has wrested control of Area 51 from government forces, and used the base's covert complement of nukes to level much of Las Vegas. He has used communication devices taken from alien spacecraft secreted

within the bowels of Area 51 to recruit aliens from across the galaxy. And, in order to bolster his defensive forces, Dr Proton has cybernetically enhanced Area 51's guards, forcing them to do his bidding. As per usual, it falls on the player to restore order to the region, and defeat Dr Proton once and for all. Truly intriguing stuff!

At present, no official release date for Duke Nukem Forever has been set. Instead, 3D Realms has issued a rather cryptic (and oft-used) statement that the game will be completed "when it's done". After a look at some of the screenshots that 3D Realms has released over the past year, that day couldn't possibly arrive soon enough.

Brett Robinson



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# GROUND CO

SO WHERE DOES REALTIME STRATEGY GO FROM HERE? MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT ARE WORKING ON A GAME THAT KEEPS ITS FEET ON THE GROUND.

## DETAILS

- **Genre:** Realtime Strategy
- **Players:** 1-Multi
- **Developer:** Massive
- **Publisher:** Sierra
- **Due:** July

\* Once an exclusively two-dimensional domain, the realtime strategy genre has recently embraced the use of 3D engines with mixed fortunes. Up until Homeworld, the virtual general could have been forgiven for thinking that 3D RTS titles had only the dubious benefit of an unwieldy interface to recommend them over their isometric rivals.

But Relic changed all that through presenting a game that not only looked incredible, but took full advantage of the tactical possibilities opened up by 3D space. And it's precisely that tradition in which Swedish outfit Massive Entertainment plans to follow with Ground Control.

To achieve this goal, Massive has decided to venture down a path that is becoming increasingly travelled in recent times. "We want to create really fast-paced and thrilling gameplay with dozens of squads," outlines Henrik Sebring, Ground Control's designer, "where the player concentrates on the tactics and action instead of resource management and base building."

## Tactically sound

While constructing a base and establishing a supply line have been staple features of the RTS genre for years, there's a tendency for the games to get bogged down in these areas. Also, the first ten to fifteen minutes of each mission in such games is typically spent repeating the same building and production orders, step-by-step. In short, it's a bit dull, isn't it?

Sebring agrees: "In Ground Control, we want the intensive gameplay from the start of a game. As a result, a good player is defined by his ability to apply

tactics on the actual combat situation, such as seizing strategically important locations, using combined arms to defeat powerful enemies, etc."

As the leader of either the Order of the New Dawn or the Crayven Corporation, the player commands his units with a bird's eye view of the battlefield. Individual units are grouped together and assigned into squads to make the delivery of orders that much more convenient. All units can be equipped with different loads - first aid kits, mines, radar devices, sentry guns, repair stations - and each has a special weapon at its disposal. Essentially, squad management replaces the old resource and base management.

It's a system that works well, especially in conjunction with the configurable AI options that allow you to define a squad's aggression and send them into the fray in one of the various available formations. "In the frenzied heat of a battle encompassing several player controlled squads, it's of utmost importance that the player does not have to fiddle around with the interface to issue orders," Sebring emphasises.

"We've tried really hard to make the interface as transparent to the player as possible and we believe that we've succeeded. All the people that we've observed playing the game have had no problem learning the controls. Actually, most people are quite surprised how easy it is to control."

## Line of sight

By alleviating one of the problematic aspects of the genre - i.e. unit control - Massive has given itself the freedom to concentrate on the tactical side of warfare. Flanking is a crucial tactic to master, as many vehicles are more heavily armoured at the front than the rear. The game does not use a fog of war, opting instead for a true line of sight method.

As Sebring explains, "The



These guys mean business.



Moving vehicles leave clouds of dust and engine exhaust in their wake.



A casualty of an AAA emplacement.



# CONTROL

player's units have a view range to detect enemies. Controlling high ground provides a definitive advantage because terrain and other features block the line of sight. Soldiers on high ground will also receive a slight accuracy bonus when engaging targets below." Conversely, accuracy is

planned raid proceed without a hitch, being able to watch it unfold from the most cinematically spectacular vantage point instantly doubles the enjoyment. Heck, it's still tremendously exciting to see your entire force get obliterated so long as you manage to swoop

## "LIKE HOMEWORLD, THE FREE-ROAMING CAMERA AFFORDS SOME STUNNING VIEWS OF THE ACTION"

lost when units find themselves under attack.

Despite the obvious tactical depth evident here, I must admit that I haven't really delved too far into it during my time with the latest Ground Control beta. Much of my time has been spent simply admiring how cool the game looks. Like Homeworld, the free-roaming camera affords some stunning views of the action. While it's obviously exciting to see your carefully

the camera across the battlefield in the most stylish manner possible.

### The future is now

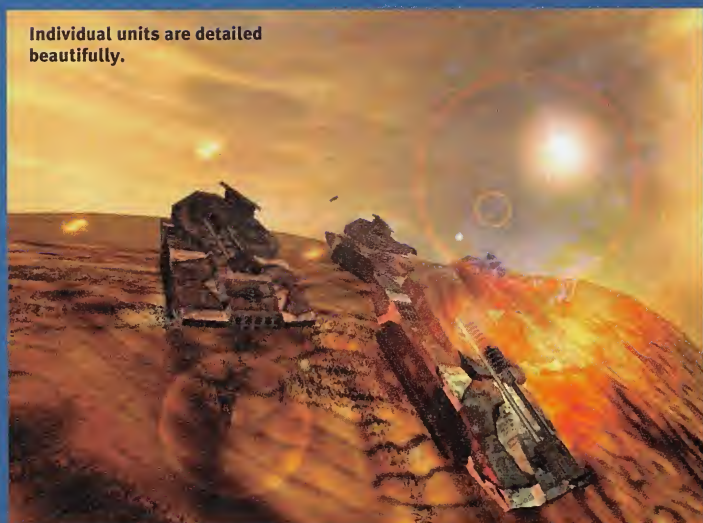
What's so remarkable about Ground Control is not the daring it shows in trying to set a new benchmark for realtime strategy. Nor is it the effortless ease with which it seems set to surpass all previous attempts at forging the genre 3D. No, the reason Ground Control is so astounding is that it is Massive's very first game. If this is what they can do while still learning their trade, can you even being to imagine what they might be capable of once they know what they're doing?

3D strategy may have had a difficult birth, but in the hands of the likes of Massive and Relic its future success would appear to be assured.

David Wildgoose



Individual units are detailed beautifully.



Time to requisition the robotic equivalent of Baygon.



Squad grouping allows the player to concentrate on tactics.



Vapourised!

## INSTANT ACTION

One of the more original features in Ground Control is to be found in its multiplayer mode. It allows people to easily join an existing drop-in game, just like you would with firstperson shooters such as Quake. It's something about which designer Henrik Sebring is clearly enthusiastic:

"I was recently working the graveyard shift trying out a new multiplayer map and just wanted to boot up the map to make sure everything looked good. Anyway, I was on the map moving my squads around making sure they could reach all strategic locations. A few minutes into the game I received the message 'Crazy Cow entered the game' and, shortly after, two Crayven dropships soared down right next to my frightened soldiers. It became a battle to the bitter death (for me this time). One of our internal testers had arrived at the office and noticed that a drop-in game was in progress and he decided to join in. Needless to say, I'm still looking forward to that re-match!"





A Bushwacker beats a hasty retreat.



Mmm... higher polygon counts.



# MECHWAR



NUMEROUS MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS MAKE MICROPROSE'S SECOND MECHWARRIOR GAME THE MOST PROMISING YET

## DETAILS

- Genre: Unfeasibly Large Robots
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Microsoft
- Publisher: Microsoft
- Due: 4th Qtr 2000



\* Based on the venerable BattleTech universe, the MechWarrior series of games has exponentially grown in popularity over the past few years. Garnering widespread acclaim, Activision's MechWarrior 2, in effect, brought the concept of Mechs and Mech combat to the masses. In spite of

depth, style and panache of its Activision precursor. Its environments, in particular, were barren wastelands almost completely devoid of those little touches that contributed to MechWarrior 2's ability to completely immerse the player within its world.

Fortunately, the MechWarrior 4 development team are well aware of the strengths and limitations of MechWarrior 3, and are determined to make this next installation in the series the best one yet. Several dev team members worked on the

promising refinements. The game will attempt to bring a BattleTech novel to life, with the player adopting the central role in the epic story. Serving to heighten the player's sense of immersion within the game world, there will also be a greater emphasis on character interaction. To illustrate this point, the tally of recorded audio and video sequences currently stands at 600.

Lancemate and enemy AI algorithms have also been written from the ground up to impart a more human feel to their actions,



**"...SKILL LEVELS WILL INCREASE AS OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE IS ACQUIRED..."**

the game's unprecedented success, FASA (owners of the BattleTech license) saw fit to revoke Activision's right to develop additional MechWarrior titles. Consequently, Activision adopted the somewhat inferior Heavy Gear universe as the basis for its giant robot titles, while the BattleTech rights were snapped up by Microprose. MechWarrior 3, an above average title in its own right, failed to live up to its potential in the eyes of many MechWarrior devotees. Though visually impressive, the game lacked the

multiplayer-only BattleTech pods that featured so prominently at the once-popular Intensity arcades scattered throughout Sydney. Others designed the original BattleTech pen and paper game over a decade ago. These facts will no doubt serve to reassure those who were a little disenchanted by Microprose's initial effort.

## Mourning your fallen comrades

MechWarrior 4 will retain the classic gameplay that the series is famous for, with a number of

abilities and reactions. An RPG-like skill system, similar to the one used in Mech Commander, will see lancemate skill levels increase in a dynamic fashion as they acquire operational experience. For instance, the player may constantly place a particular lancemate at the helm of a light Mech outfitted with long range sensor suites. If that lancemate is consistently ordered to perform a scouting role, over time he or she will become a reconnaissance/sensor specialist; adept at detecting the presence of adversaries and infiltrating enemy territory.





Sadly, Battlemech pilots were excluded from the Frequent Flyer programs.



Redneck mechwarriors revelled in the annual roo hunt.



# WARRIOR 4

Similarly, a lancemate piloting an assault mech who frequently accompanies the player into the thick of battle will become a combat specialist over time. This innovation will lead players to feel a much greater sense of loss when lancemates perish—particularly if they have achieved Elite status.

Although currently in Pre Alpha phase, MechWarrior 4 is visually impressive. On a superficial level it resembles MechWarrior 3, but the game's custom built engine allows for much greater levels of detail. As a result, environments are no longer the barren wastelands they were in MechWarrior 3. Instead, they are quite lavish, and replete with trees and other vegetation. In all, fifteen different environment types, ranging from forests and swamps to cities and arctic tundra, will be included. Filled with civilian vehicles, hover tanks, aircraft and, of course, enemy mechs, the environments seem to be truly 'alive', in contrast to MechWarrior 3's seemingly static locations.

The increased polygon counts and crisper textures of the mechs themselves have contributed to a markedly improved overall appearance. Mech animations are also smoother, with mechs adopting a more noticeable limp when they sustain leg damage. Weapon effects have been redesigned to give them greater visual impact, and dynamic

lighting makes for some spectacular night missions.

## Limitless longterm value?

The player will be able to pilot a minimum of twenty mechs, six of which have never before featured in the BattleTech universe. The campaign component of MechWarrior 4 will be comprised of approximately thirty missions. Although some may be disappointed at the absence of a dynamic campaign, its branching nature will enhance the game's replay value immensely. The developers are also eager to rectify the limitations and performance issues that plagued multiplayer MechWarrior 3. As such, multiplayer action in MechWarrior 4 won't be restricted to pure deathmatch. Capture the Flag, Assault, Defend, King of the Hill and Cooperative modes will be implemented, finally giving many MechWarrior fans exactly what they've been waiting for. And, as if that weren't enough to almost guarantee longterm playability, a comprehensive map and mission editor will ship with the game.

MechWarrior 4 is officially slated for a late 2000 release. Though this may be a tad optimistic, there's little doubt that the game will be absolutely incredible when completed.

Brett Robinson

Alpha strikes: toastly!



Astaire proved remarkably adept at piloting his Madcat.





# GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

SO WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE: THE BIG GUY, THE LITTLE GUYS OR THE BABE?

## DETAILS

- Genre: Action/Strategy
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Planet Moon Studios
- Publisher: Interplay
- Due: October

It feels like it's been in development for years - and, well, it has. But as these new shots, courtesy of the GeForce 2, attest, the wait is worth it.





# ARCANUM: OF STEAMWORKS AND MAGICK OBSCURA

BEHIND THE WEIRD NAME LIES A POTENTIALLY FASCINATING GAME

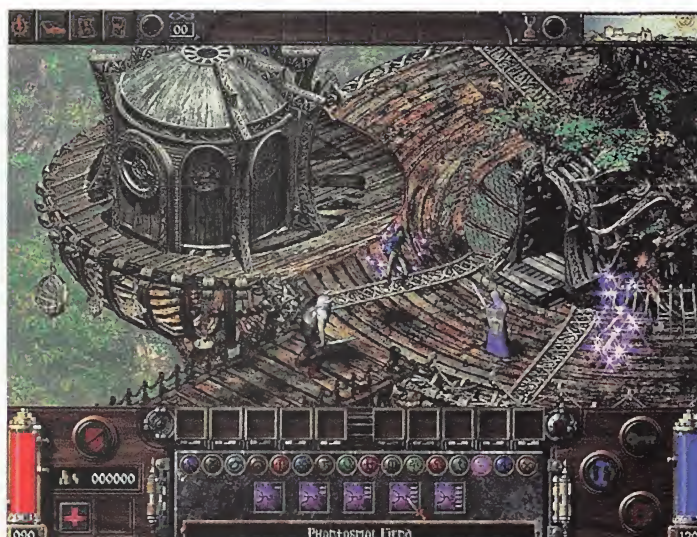


Alien abductions occur at the most inconvenient moments.

## DETAILS

- Genre: Steampunk Roleplaying
- Players: 1
- Developer: Troika Games
- Publisher: Sierra
- Due: TBA

Best known for the much-acclaimed post-apocalyptic RPG, *Fallout*, Tim Cain seems set to repeat that success with his latest venture.



# HITMAN

IT'S A PROFESSIONAL THING



Our agent subdued the offending briefcase with a swift knee to the groin.



Chinese New Year celebrations were rather sedate.



## DETAILS

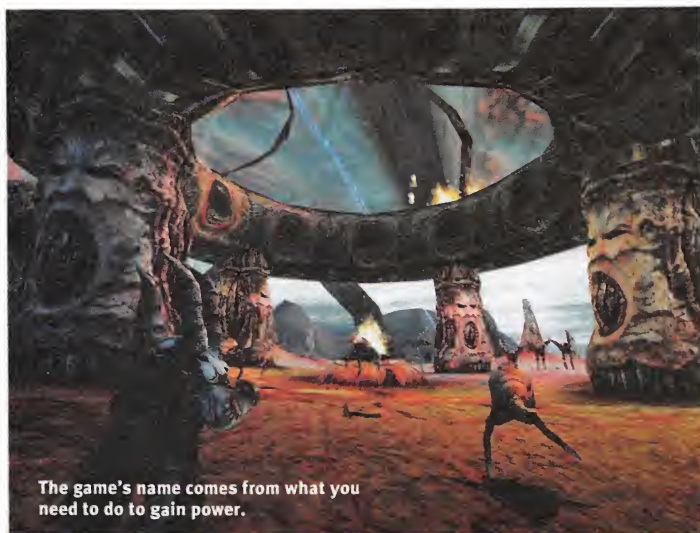
- Genre: Thirdperson Assassination
- Players: 1
- Developer: Io
- Publisher: Eidos
- Due: 4th Qtr 2000

Yet another game in the burgeoning "stealth-em-up" genre, *Hitman* puts you in the role of a hired killer. Let's hope there's a touch of John Woo.



# SACRIFICE

SHINY'S MAGICAL NEW OFFERING TO THE GODS



The game's name comes from what you need to do to gain power.

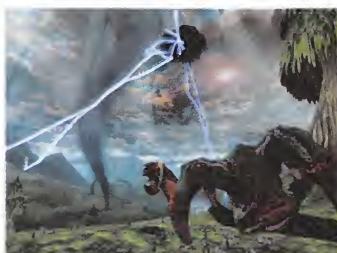
## DETAILS

- Genre: Surrealtime Strategy
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Shiny
- Publisher: Interplay
- Due: September

Like Giants, these amazing shots arrive with thanks to the new GeForce 2 card. Shiny's god-sim seems somewhat influenced by Populous.



The environment looks straight out of a surrealist painting.



# DUKES OF HAZARD

MOONSHINE, COUSINS AND GUNS. YEE-HAW!



Below: Hey, is that Colonel Sanders?



## DETAILS

- Genre: Cheesy Car Chase
- Players: 1
- Developer: Ubisoft
- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Due: June

Dukes of Hazzard promises to intersperse rendered cutscenes to narrate the game's central focus - ludicrous, high-speed car chases.





# OBI-WAN

IT SEEMS THE DARK FORCES TAG WAS JUST A PHANTOM

## DETAILS

■ Genre: Jedi Power Battling

■ Players: 1

■ Developer: LucasArts

■ Publisher: LucasArts

■ Due: 4th Qtr 2000

LucasArts' next Star Wars game isn't a sequel to Jedi Knight. Rather it's an action/adventure based on the new trilogy of films.





# TITANIUM ANGELS

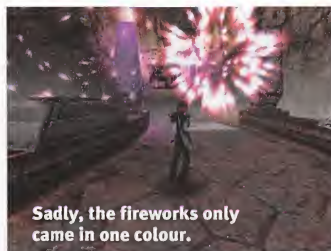
IT'S THE TALE OF ONE GIRL AND HER PET ROBOT



## DETAILS

- Genre: Girl Meets Robot Action
- Players: 1
- Developer: SCi
- Publisher: SCi
- Due: 3rd Qtr 2000

The main feature of this sci-fi action game is the presence of two playable characters. Players must solve problems using the abilities of both.



Sadly, the fireworks only came in one colour.



It's hard to resist standing on such impressive podiums.



We assume that's good for her.

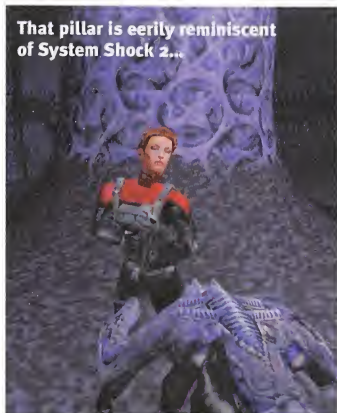
# STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

AFTER SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, RAVEN SHOWS US ITS NEXT TREK

## DETAILS

- Genre: Firstperson Shooter
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Raven
- Publisher: Activision
- Due: July

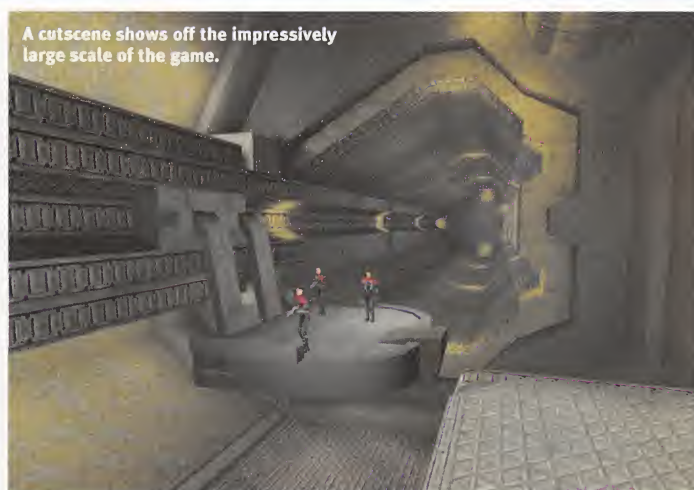
Raven, the perennial id Software licensee, returns. The Quake 3 engine should enjoy the chance to show off some colourful textures at least.



That pillar is eerily reminiscent of System Shock 2...



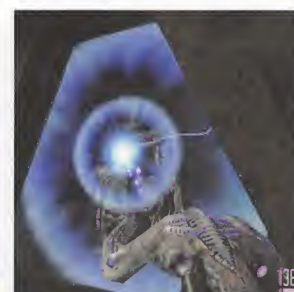
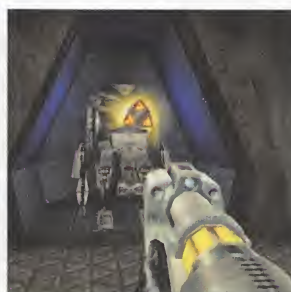
The alien weaponry looks suitably fantastic.



A cutscene shows off the impressively large scale of the game.



Raven has obviously upped the typical Star Trek action quotient.





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# GST

Here at PC PowerPlay we aren't afraid to tackle the big issues no matter how complicated or inexplicable they may be. When the first line of an article includes both the words complicated and inexplicable, something involving bureaucracy is sure to follow. Welcome to the wonderful world of predicting the impact of the GST on gaming life as you know it.

It seemed logical that the best place to find out about the impact

of this exciting new tax would be the Australian Tax Office.

ATO Public Affairs Officer Janet Stewart explained that the Tax Office's main concern was telling people how much tax to pay and making sure that they received the right amount. She said that software currently carries no wholesale sales tax but will have the 10% GST. Hardware, on the other hand, has around 22% sales tax on it, which will be replaced by the straight 10%.



# ELLS & TAXES

**Timothy C. Best** investigates the impact the GST will have on the games you play

↑ Software - up 10%



## Complications

Of course, something so straightforward wouldn't fill my word count for this article. Fortunately, Stewart went on to complicate the issue: "We tell people how to work out how much tax to pay - how they set the price after that is up to them."

She cites the situation in car sales as an example of how the industry and the markets set prices, not the taxman (or taxwoman). Since new cars will carry less tax after the GST, people decided they would wait

for the tax to come in before buying a car. To combat this, all manner of car sales have been given the green light, meaning that cars are probably cheaper now than they will be after the tax on them comes down. So much for simple cause and effect - in this case, tax goes down and prices go up. Go figure.

It was obvious that it would take more than a trip to the tax office to clear this up. Next I turned my gaze to the largest game software giant I could find, someone who publishes,

distributes and has a studio right here in Australia.

Electronic Arts's National Sales Manager Jerry van Driel-Vis agrees with Stewart about the relationship between tax and recommended retail price. There's the competition to consider, international prices, anticipated popularity of the game, market support, actual cost of development, "sweet spot marketing" and so on. He does say, however, that with the current low margins in the industry and the console market being in a state

of transition (anyone hanging out for a PS2?) software houses would be likely to pass on the tax rise on games to the consumer.

Van Driel-Vis adds: "Almost every company in the industry now is also a publicly listed company - in EA's case we are listed on the NASDAQ. As such, we need to try to ensure a certain level of profit margin for the investors also. In the end, however, the true price is set by the consumer who will determine what price he or she is prepared to pay for a particular product."



## Internet - up 10% across the board

next

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2000

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With online purchasing an increasing accessible option, prices are only likely to go so high. EA's Sales Manager assures us that games are very reasonably priced here and even with the rises for GST, they should still be very competitive. With localised content and the greater use of worldwide release dates, he says that the GST shouldn't push people out of buying Australian and onto the net for their software needs.

### The Hard Sell

Any half-serious game player knows that buying software is just the tip of the gaming-addiction iceberg. Computers need upgrades to stay at fighting fitness. This is where the good news would seem to come in. Ben Davis is the Audio Manager of Australia's own world-beating PC audio designing, developing and distributing company, Xitel.

Davis says: "The GST isn't really going to have much of an impact on us since it will basically simplify things by removing all the confusing sales tax brackets and replacing them with one unified tax rate."

Beyond that he also points out that hardware currently bears a sales tax of 19.8% to 22%, so a 10% GST should only make it cheaper for their customers. The question still remains whether buy-ables in this situation will actually come down in price. We all know they should, but will it happen? Are we just all a tad cynical?

Philip Lettas is the Sales and Marketing Director of Propellerhead, a local computer games retailer with a strong online presence. He seems to think that things won't be so bad under the GST for the digitally-inclined, at least in the beginning.

"In theory, the most likely

outcome on July 1, is that software will go up an average of 7% and hardware - meaning pure hardware with no software component - will go down by an average of 10%," he predicts.

It should be noted that hardware prices are a little trickier to predict than software because they are more closely linked to the Australian dollar's performance.

Lettas says that there are rumours that for big-ticket items especially, publishers or vendors will cop the tax without passing it on for the first few months to avoid too much of a price shock. By big-ticket, we are talking \$250 and up. So if you are looking to buy Photoshop or 3D StudioMax in the next financial year you may be in luck for a little while at least.

On the games front, Lettas is optimistic as well: "Games, on the other hand, will not be affected by the 10%, if you ask me. In that, it is not a price driven market, it is a

quality driven market. People traditionally pay up to 20% more for a premium title than "dud" or ordinary title."

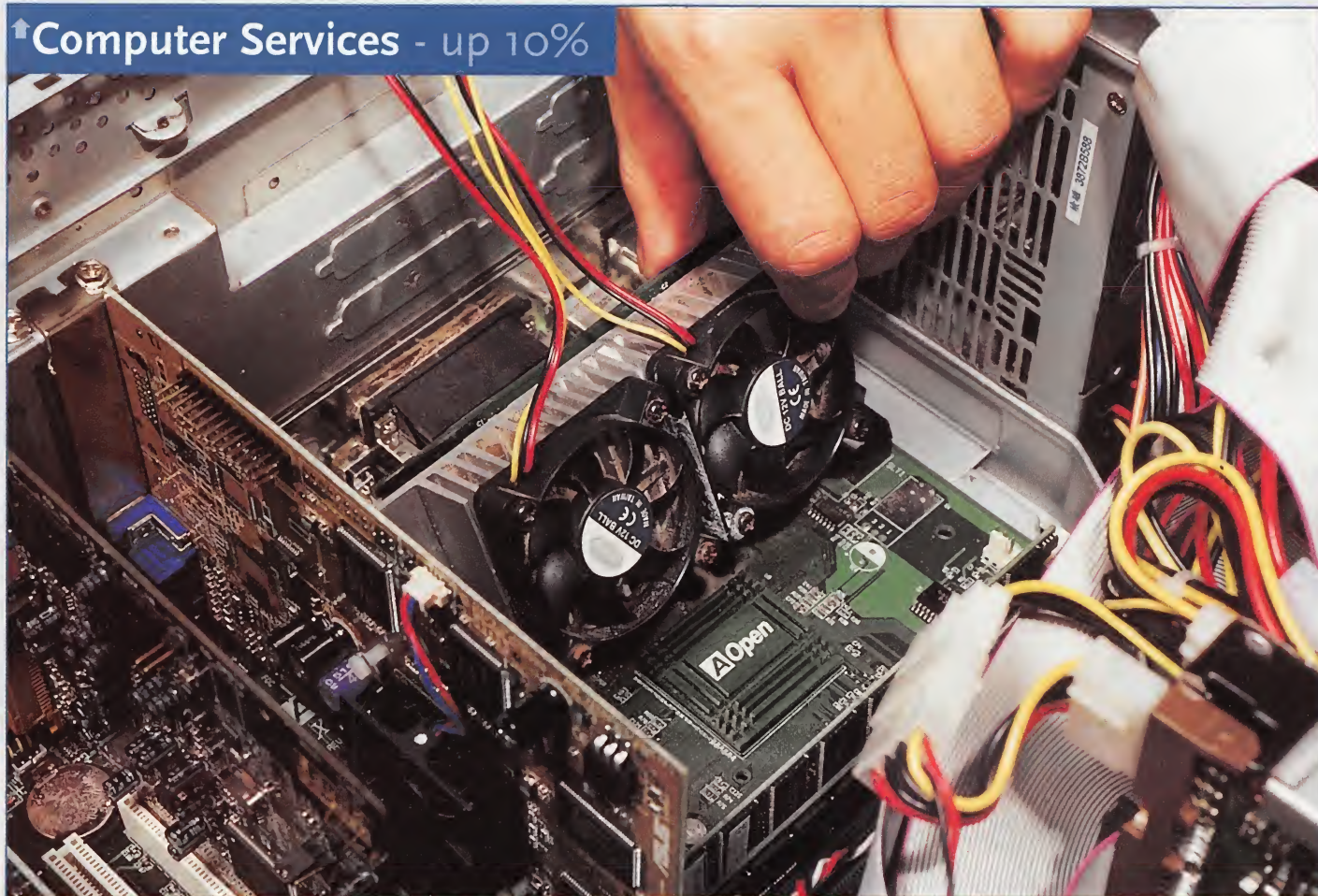
### Going online

Being in the frontlines, ordering games from distributors and selling them to the public, Lettas's words might be reassuring, but he says we shouldn't get too laidback about this whole thing. There are other things to consider about this tax. For one, all internet services are going to catch the tax.

According to Telstra, almost all of its services are going to come in for some taxing. That means tax on the local call to the ISP, tax on the Wireplay service, tax on the Bigpond account, tax on the amount you pay when you exceed your download limit and so on. Telstra, in particular, hasn't worked out its pricing schemes for after the GST, but it



## ↑ Computer Services - up 10%



would seem consumers are going to get the rise.

There are also computer repairs and support to consider under the banner of service. If you have a game or part couriered to you, there is another GST taxable service right there.

Will pre-paid online games be caught in the GST net? The best information the tax office could give is that if you use an Australian company the GST will apply, whereas if you have "electronic interaction with an overseas entity" it will not.

Then there is the issue concerning escalating GST rates. The Government has stated that there will be no GST rises, but if you look at the examples of other countries who have walked the consumption tax route, the precedent definitely goes in the other direction. Lettas says "our biggest fear as a nation should be that although 10% might be

okay, will the next term of government, or governments, sneak it up by 2, 5, 7.5 then 10% as other nations have?" Under such a circumstance, and with the ease of internet shopping, buying Australian may be made a tricky thing for anyone with an eye for bargains.

The GST has been the subject of many scare campaigns and even a lot of disinformation. People don't like trying new things, especially when they cost so much to get rolling and more so if it is likely to hit them where it hurts - in the wallet. Initially it was feared that everything would go up by the whole 10% with only a 3 or 4 percent cut in income tax. Now we know it won't happen like that.

### Market forces

It would seem that, in the case of a hardcore gamer, hardware will come down in price making

## "SO ALL IN ALL, JUST TALKING TAX ON SOFTWARE, SERVICES AND NET COSTS WE LOSE, BUT IN HARDWARE WE WIN."

upgrades a little more affordable. On the other hand, things are complicated by how our poor old dollar is faring.

Software is likely to catch pretty much the whole rise, but this might not have much effect. Games have sat around the \$90 mark for so many years now, with inflation and increasing development costs offset by increasing competition and games gaining a much wider audience and, hence, having a greater a volume of sales. In the end, considering market forces, getting punters used to games costing around \$100 might be more hassle than it's worth.

Services which never had a

sales tax (like the internet) are likely to pass on the GST straight to the customer, so expect phone bills and internet costs to be up by the 10%.

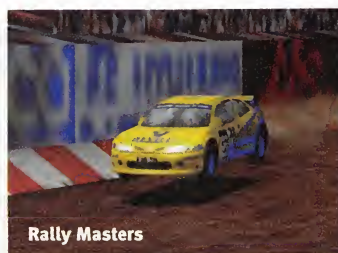
So all in all, just talking tax on software, services and net costs we lose, but in hardware we win. How this translates into the "real world" all depends on market forces and ultimately, how much we are willing to spend. Gotta love capitalism.

Right, that's the games and taxes bits out of the way, but what about sequels? Well, in a future issue we'll bring you an updated report on exactly what effect the GST has had in its translation into the "real world". ■

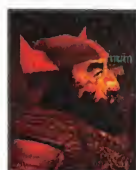


# REVIEW CONTENTS

Another fine month in PC games...



## THE PCPP CREW



**March Stepnik**

**What I'm playing:**

Diablo II Beta, Grim Fandango, Silly Buggers III.



**David Wildgoose**

**What I'm playing:**

Deus Ex, Castlevania.



**Malcolm Campbell**

**What I'm playing:**

Vampire Saviour, Daikatana (for, like, ten minutes. Hah! What a joke!)



**Ashley Millott**

**What I'm playing:**

The fool.



**Brett Robinson**

**What I'm playing:**

Comanche vs Hokum, Deus Ex



**John Dewhurst**

**What I'm playing:**

The Nameless One as a fighter, tip sparring, old De La Soul tracks.



**Christian Read**

**What I'm playing:**

Asheron's Call



**Major Des McNicholas**

**What I'm playing:**

Alliance, Jane's FA-18, Soldier of Fortune, Gunship!



**Edward Fox**

**What I'm playing:**

Superbikes 2000, GP500, Grand Prix Legends, Rally Masters



**Hugh Norton-Smith**

**What I'm playing:**

Anything but Daikatana.



**Agata Budinska**

**What I'm playing:**

The Sims, Might & Magic VI, Bust-a-move 3DX



**James Cottee**

**What I'm playing:**

Astro Dodge, Scorched Earth, BC3000AD, Q3, Pengo





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### THE PCPP REVIEW SYSTEM

**NEED:** The bare minimum system requirements to get the game up and running at a playable speed. Don't even think about the game unless you have this system.

**WANT:** The ideal system requirements for the game. You can still play it well without this setup, but this will allow you to see the game as it was meant to be.

**FOR:** The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.  
**AGAINST:** The major reasons why you won't. Read both and decide which seems the most appropriate and important to you.

**95+** **PLATINUM AWARD**  
A virtually flawless title, one that expands our gaming horizons while providing a supremely playable experience. The absolute best there is. Everyone will love this game.



**94-90** **GOLD AWARD**  
A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre or a groundbreaking title that will soon be setting trends.



**89-80** A strong title that's hard to fault. Eminently playable and likely to remain on the hard drive for some time. But perhaps not the best in its field.

**79-60** Competent and playable. A few gameplay flaws or unoriginality hold this game back from a higher rating. For fans of the genre.

**59-40** Decidedly average. Probably either full of bugs or lacking some crucial features. But, most of all, probably boring.

**39-0** A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

# PC PowerPlay

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# SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

Epic - yes, that's right - EPIC strategy developed in England by Australians about the Japanese.



## tips

Never, ever go into a battle without as much intelligence as you can muster. Send in your agent provocateurs. Ninja whoever you can, and use the Christian priests to do what you must. If you know an enemy is staunchly Buddhist, then bring in Warrior Monks. Do everything you can to ensure you know what the enemy will throw against you and make contingencies against all his tactics. Get the high ground and be certain your units are not too spread out and thus vulnerable to attack. Get your enemies to turn on each other if you can. No troop type is worth thinking as much like a general as a general should.



Thick fog can conceal vast armies, and adds to the atmosphere of tension

The thing that most surprises me most about Shogun: Total War is that this hasn't been done before. Clearing mists, great banners, clans, stoic and capable men drawing up into lines and honourable combat between honourable men: it all seems so obvious now. During 16th century Japan this was known as the time of Sengoku, the country where an endless war was waged for dominance of the nation. Now it's your turn to try and achieve the status of the greatest warlord in the world, the Shogun.

Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood" made into a game



## Machiavellian

Ostensibly, Shogun is an RTS game with some elements of turn-based combat thrown in. The game is played out on two levels. One is the realm of

training them - veteran and well-trained troops can really make the difference between winning and losing - and enter into diplomatic ties with your neighbours. The latter factor promises

**"UP TO 5000 INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS CAN BE BROUGHT ONTO THE FIELD"**

spies, geisha and ninja. These can give you reliable - and, of course, not so reliable - information. Typical events involve Mongol raids, earthquakes, plagues, and even Dutch and Portuguese missionaries landing. In classic fashion, you must balance growth versus economic concerns, but with less micromanagement and far more need to fear beautiful women whispering rumours about you into the ears of your allies. It can really get rather Machiavellian.

Each turn in the game lasts one season (spring, summer, autumn, winter). Most of the action in the campaign takes place in this turn-based mode, where you move armies about and deploy your various spies, saboteurs, assassins and the like. It's also where you build up the armies by

much devious fun in the multiplayer format. It's all pretty straightforward to use as well, thanks to the simple drag-and-drop style interface.

When you are within the war room, you plan the attacks, the building programs and the assassinations. But while these are certainly vital parts of your game strategy, ultimately it will all come down to you and the enemy meeting at the field of battle. And this is when the real game starts.

## Downhill charge

There is a variety of tactical units that you can use when combating the enemies, and a host of various factors one must consider when developing overall battle strategy. Troops include archers, light samurai, cavalry, yari samurai (spearmen), warrior monks,





(top) The strategic map  
(above) Narrow bridges are potential deathtraps

teppu ashigaru (musketeers), no-dachi samurai (elite foot soldiers). The physics model is very advanced indeed, with the best example being that charging troops do more damage when going downhill because of their increased momentum. Unit choices must be very carefully balanced against this rule. Combat is vital, but you have to be ready for it. Wade in blind and it's over.

Epic is perhaps the best word to describe the battles in Shogun. The huge fully 3D terrain can be viewed from a variety of camera angles, similar to the technique used in Braveheart. Equally huge are the armies that you will lead into battle. Up to 5000 individual soldiers can be brought onto the field at any one time. The combat runs smoothly due to the use of 2D animated sprites rather than the big memory eating 3D polygons. While it may sound a bit retro, trust me, it works perfectly. Polygon characters would irreparably diminish the enormous scale upon which Shogun is built.

In a nice flourish, armies can be reinforced during the battle. The directed camera is an absolute must when it comes to combat and you'll be making mistakes if you don't totally understand the battlefield. Weather, too, is something that you'll have to take into account. Want a large number of gunpowder weapons in your army? Pray to the merciful Amidu No Butsu for sun, because rain will render them useless. And the odd winter campaign can be made a lot easier by crossing frozen rivers. And then you have to worry about your own honour on top of everything else. Troops won't follow a Daimyo who they don't respect.



### A cool Sun

If you get the impression the game is tremendously complex, that's because it is. This is not Warlords 2, children. This is very serious and very hardcore gaming. You won't win it by having the biggest wizard (*Nor the biggest... ah, never mind - Ed*). Part of this complexity is due to the game AI essentially running to the rules set down by Sun Tzu, the greatest of all Chinese generals. And that may be the coolest thing in the history of earth.

Shogun boasts some rather nice hardware support as well, such as a full dual Voodoo 2 setup. It also takes advantage of your funky new 3D soundcard. On top of all this, the game looks good, sounds good and plays well.

While it's an absolute monster of a size and occasionally chugs along, that's no excuse for any fan of war games and RTS to not have this. Seriously, this is the one you've been waiting for.

Christian Read

### extra

As in all things, a little bit of research hardly goes astray. Read Sun Tzu's Art of War, along with Thucydides, Von Clausewitz and Mushashi and the other great martial thinkers these books have been the basis for militaristic history. The Art of War has long been considered premier amongst these. You should read the book even if you don't buy the game.



- Genre: Historical RTS ● Players: 1 - 8
- Developer: Dreamtime/Creative Assembly ● Publisher: EA ● Distributor: EA
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW
- Need: P200, 32 MB RAM ● Want: P350, 64 MB RAM, 3D Card
- URL: [www.totalwar.com](http://www.totalwar.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Supreme tactical skills, extremely historical. Above all, immersive gameplay.

**AGAINST:** Complex, difficult, long.

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# ARMY MEN: AIR TACTICS

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the sandpit, 3DO has produced the fourth title in its innovative plastic soldier series.



Army Men: Air Tactics comes remarkably quickly on the heels of Army Men: In Space (66% PCPP#48), and takes our heroes into the three-dimensional battlefield. As Captain William Blade, ace chopper pilot, your job is to help Sarge thwart the evil designs of General Plastro's Tan Army. Things are a little tougher this time around though, as Plastro is supported by the mad Grey Doctor and his weird array of creatures. For many veterans of the series, taking to the skies will be a neat twist on a proven formula, although some may see this campaign as 3DO's "Bridge Too Far".

## Mouse driving

Air Tactics is a top-down RTS, based around the actions of a single helicopter. Most missions involve the support of ground forces, including transportation and direct fire, although the emphasis is clearly upon your own efforts to solve puzzles, find the enemy, and employ a wide range of weapons of mass destruction. Three different



into the multiplay aspect of the game, as things get repetitive pretty quickly.

Flight control in Air Tactics is simple, particularly for those with a wheel mouse. Direction is entirely mouse driven: the wheel or keystrokes select weapons, and there's not much else to worry about. Left-click to fire, right-click to move, while an on-screen HUD (Head Up Display) tells you everything you need to know.

## Combat assist

Mission planning is non-existent (they're only toys!), but a simple radar provides early warning of insect attacks and keeps you on track towards the objectives. Despite the limited range of actions, 3DO has produced the best interface so far, with tasks made even



passengers being able to operate side guns, and the use of beacons to direct friendly forces, but the feeling of being part of a larger operation doesn't really come through. This is one for the kids and real fans of the series. Multiplay may turn out to be a huge hit, but I think I've hung up my fly swatter for good!

Major Des McNicholas

**"...SOME MAY SEE THIS CAMPAIGN AS 3DO'S 'BRIDGE TOO FAR'..."**

choppers are available as the game progresses through twenty-odd single player missions in a variety of classic toy soldier worlds.

Once again you can slug it out in the sandbox, battle through the bathroom, and lay siege to the lounge! As you would expect, weapons include firecrackers, green paint and bottle rockets, and the bathtub is teeming with submarines and plastic patrol boats. Fortunately, a lot of effort has also gone

simpler by a number of "combat assist" options. Most missions provide some interesting challenges, and the special effects and graphics are on par with earlier releases in the series.

Air Tactics has probably taken the Army Men concept as far as it can go (although that won't stop more sequels!), and some players will be disappointed with the lack of hands-on control over Sarge and the boys. There are a number of neat touches, like

## extra

HG Wells may have been first in the 19th Century, but this is the book that kicked off the whole modern era of wargaming. Donald Featherstone's classic "War Games" (1962) is still a great read. Look for it at a library near you!



- Genre: Toy Soldier RTS ● Players: 1 - 4
- Developer: 3DO ● Publisher: 3DO ● Distributor: Jack of all Games
- Price: \$49.95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G8
- Need: P133, 32MB RAM, 100MB HDD ● Want: P200, 64MB RAM, 275MB HDD
- URL: [www.armymen.com](http://www.armymen.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Simple, fun and fast. Low system requirements and a full range of multiplay options.

**AGAINST:** Repetitive, very few forces to control, and Sarge kept letting me down!

65





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# RALLY MASTERS

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a new winner! This is one game that does indeed live up to its name.

## tips

- Aggressiveness with the wheel is a must; a relaxed driving posture will see you getting nowhere.
- When racing on the super stages, don't get sidetracked paying attention to what your opponent is doing as this will certainly lead to disaster.
- Get as much practice at each venue prior to competing there. Trying to compete on an unfamiliar track will keep the team panelbeater very busy indeed.



The circuit at the local mini golf course proved the toughest event on the calendar.



A decidedly risky parking spot.



Fast food delivery training.



## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Rally Masters is based on the Michelin Race of Champions, an annual competition held at the end of each regular rally season. Competitors are amongst the best rally drivers in the world, with names like McRae, Mäkinen, Auriol and Sainz all gracing the record books.

Drivers compete in knockout type competitions at venues from the Gran Canaria Islands and hills of Italy to the countryside of central England. New to the 1999 calendar is the addition of a Nations cup, which invites stars from all forms of racing to compete against one another. Fogerty from Superbikes to Coulthard from F1 fame are just a couple of the names which attended last year's event.

From the bright sparks at Digital Illusions, Rally Masters is without a doubt the most impressive representation of rallying to ever grace a PC. Boasting an amazing 51 unique tracks, 22 dirt carving vehicles and 23 real-life rally drivers to compete against, this title boldly stands tall amongst the increasingly overcrowded rally genre.

### Losing it

Right off the bat, the number one factor that makes Rally Masters a success is its awesome recreation of car handling. All cars are fantastically representative of how (I would imagine) the real things actually behave. Gone are the days of being handheld around each track by a sad and simple physics engine. Rally Masters demands an extremely high level of ability at the hardest of its three difficulty levels, and is a challenge even on the easiest setting. Counter-steering, powerslides and gigantic jumps must all become second nature to compete against the likes of McRae and Mäkinen, let alone beating them! From the high speed, jump ridden, all-time slide out track that

is Gran Canaria to the indoor motocross style spaghetti circuit of the USA, any virtual driver's concentration will be running full kilt just trying complete a lap without losing it. And lose it you will!

When first jumping behind the wheel, one could be forgiven for thinking the graphics are a little bland. Even with support for resolutions of up to 1600x1200, visually Rally Masters is a tad underwhelming. The cars, whilst resembling their counterparts, just don't quite cut it as far as realism is concerned. Sure they're shaped like cars, and even painted like cars, but in comparison to the recently released Rally Championship 2000 they're just not convincing enough. The driver and co-pilot resemble large blob like characters, and upon closer inspection are actually faceless! Or just keep their eyes closed all the time! (Knowing your driving, Ed, I suspect the latter - Ed.)

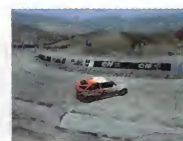
### Getting dirty

As far as the visuals go there is a saving grace. Damage - and lots of it! Each car can be completely obliterated by an



## TRY, TRY AND TRY AGAIN!

As was the case when Papyrus' Grand Prix Legends was released, many would-be players called it quits early in the day simply due to the awesome difficulty and steep learning curve involved. Be prepared folks, as Rally Masters is just as difficult as the 1967 F1 sim is. Getting around the track at anything even remotely close to competitive time will force drivers to draw upon every inch of skill and concentration they possess. Try to keep at it no matter how long it takes as the end result is immensely rewarding. I've said it about virtual driving before and I'll say it again: from a financial perspective, thank goodness it isn't real!



Competing drivers cursed the Harrier team's advantage.



### Almost lag-free

Along with the supreme effort Rally Masters provides from purely a simulation perspective, the genre happily welcomes the first ever (decent) multiplayer rallying mode. Network play was clearly a large influence whilst developing Rally Masters, as there is a nifty multiplayer lobby available for setting up those online encounters. A dedicated server option is supported, and there are already international servers popping up left, right and centre. The network code is of a surprisingly high

over-aggressive driver. Collisions, scrapes and gut-wrenching flips all result in clearly visible damage to the car, even to the point where the vehicle is hardly recognisable when tortured to the extreme. Additionally, by the end of a race, the cars are generally covered from headlight to tail in mud and dirt picked up from the track.

Among the large selection of racing options available, the two cars on one track mode quickly became my favourite. Pitting one driver-blob and co-pilot-blob team against another, each car begins the race on opposite sections of the same track with the aim of being the first car to navigate both sections prior to hitting the black and white flag. Each mode of racing incorporates three levels of opposition

from the humble F2 proving grounds to the hardcore, orgasmic experience that is

## "EACH CAN CAN BE OBLITERATED BY AN OVER-AGGRESSIVE DRIVER"

Rally Legends. (Orgasmic? You really need to get out more - Ed.)

All of the circuits and timed tracks are unique in surroundings, with one location bearing little resemblance to another. From treacherous car-destroying snow and ice in - surprise, surprise - Sweden, to the rugged, gravel-ridden mountainside roads of northern Italy, all the venue's real-life geography has found its way into Rally Masters.

standard, with lag on a cable connection totally non-existent, while 56k will register only the occasional stutter. All in all, rally fans the world over are in for some adrenalin-pumping action.

While not visually stunning, the crust of this game is really in the driving, and as any virtual driver who knows their stuff will confess - that's where it counts!

Edward Fox



Burnout Comp entrant #2.



**extra**

<http://www.imp.mc/roc.html>  
This is what it's all about!



- Genre: Rally Simulation ● Players: 1-8
- Developer: Digital Illusions ● Publisher: Infogrames ● Distributor: Ozisoft
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P-266, 32MB RAM, 200MB HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D, Glide), 8xCD
- Want: PII-300, 64MB RAM, 312MB HDD, 32xCDROM ● URL: [www.rallymasters.com](http://www.rallymasters.com)

**PCPP**

**FOR:** Without a doubt the best physics ever seen in the genre. Exceptional multiplayer capabilities.  
**AGAINST:** Graphics are a little bland and don't do the rest of the sim justice.

**89**



# ENEMY ENGAGED: RAH-66 COMANCHE VS KA-52 HOKUM

Apache/Havoc's older brother outshines the king of chopper sims.



For fans of fixed wing aircraft simulations, the past few years have yielded a bevy of increasingly immersive and astoundingly realistic titles. Much to their chagrin, the same has not held true for their rotary wing-loving brethren. Many have waited with bated breath for the day that the heavens would deliver unto them a worthy replacement for their beloved (but aging) Longbow 2. Without the excessive marketing hype that typically accompanies the release of blockbuster titles, some may be surprised to learn that, with the release of Comanche vs Hokum, that day has arrived.

## Fun for novices, heaven for pros

Unsurprisingly, the game accurately models the premiere recon/attack helicopters from either side of the Bering Strait: America's RAH-66 Comanche and Russia's KA-52 Hokum.

## "THE REPRESENTATION OF FLIGHT PHYSICS IS IMPRESSIVE..."

Each helicopter has its own unique advantages and limitations. The Comanche enjoys unsurpassed resistance to detection and an avionics suite specifically designed to substantially reduce crew workloads. Conversely, the Hokum boasts vastly superior manoeuvrability and an even more potent arsenal of weaponry.

The complexity of the flight models and sensor suites can be reduced to a level where complete novices would be

relatively comfortable, but maxing out the realism settings is where Comanche/Hokum truly shines. In particular, the game's representation of flight physics is incredibly impressive. Now de rigeur flight dynamics like retreating blade stall and ground effect have been faithfully replicated, in addition to previously unsimulated phenomenon like the dreaded 'vortex ring' caused by unusually sharp descents.

## The icing on the cake

Ultra orthodox chopper sim fanatics may take issue with a number of miniscule deficiencies, like the inability to designate Priority Fire Zones when ripple-firing radar guided Hellfires, but the game's positive aspects far outweigh any negatives. Visually, Comanche/Hokum is unmatched, save for the likes of Gunship. Screenshots could never do this game justice,

especially when it comes to the fully articulated aircrews who have been recreated in astonishing detail. And the dynamic campaigns make it entirely possible to play the game for months on end. Couple this with connectivity to Razorworks' Apache/Havoc, and Comanche/Hokum represents phenomenal value for money. A worthy successor to Longbow 2 and the new champion of chopper sims.

Brett Robinson



## extra

[www.boeing.com](http://www.boeing.com)  
The company behind the Comanche's development, and other projects like the somewhat disturbing Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle.



- Genre: Recon/Attack Helicopters ● Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Razorworks ● Publisher: Empire Interactive ● Distributor: QV Software
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: G
- Need: P266, 64MB RAM, 300MB HDD, 4MB 3D Videocard (D3D)
- Want: PIII-600, 128MB RAM, Joystick ● URL: [www.enemyengaged.com](http://www.enemyengaged.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Jaw dropping graphics, a dynamic campaign and two awesome helicopters.

**AGAINST:** A few niggling omissions like PFZ's, and the need for a relatively high end PC.

91



# MARTIAN GOTHIC: UNIFICATION

Resident Evil 2 is re-animated on Mars



From a zombie's perspective, Mars is as good a place as any to live a little. After all, breathing is more a luxury than a necessity for a mindless automaton and thinking certainly takes second place to an unwholesome craving for human flesh. Unfortunately, the latter is in short supply on Mars until a team of three arrives to investigate the circumstances around the last message from Vita 1: "If you send a manned craft, warn the crew to stay alone. Stay alive".

Matlock, Kenzo and Karne must follow this directive while working together to unravel the mysteries behind the bacterial infestation of the now



There is, however, an obvious disadvantage in controlling three separate characters in a realtime game. Characters not under direct control, for example, may be attacked. Thankfully, Creative Reality has installed an ear-splitting wail that accompanies a bright red flashing 'danger' sign to warn of such an occasion. Gamers with heart problems should watch for this one - it almost gave me a turn!

Creative Reality has also allowed

## "SENDING NITRO GLYCERINE THROUGH THE TUBES WAS NOT RECOMMENDED"

derelict research base. The bacterium has transformed the Vita 1's previous occupants into zombies intent on preventing the three investigators from uncovering the dark secret held deep beneath the Martian surface. Each character is controlled from a third-person perspective and navigated through detailed pre-rendered corridors and rooms collecting items to overcome the usual action/adventure obstacles. Luckily, a map has been provided for those with a limited direction sense.



each of the characters to exchange items while maintaining the "stay alone, stay alive" edict through incorporating a system of 'vacuum tubes' that shuttles small objects around Vita 1. Matlock also informed me that sending Nitro Glycerine through the tubes was not recommended as "it might blow the roof off!"

Although Martian Gothic is conceptually simple there are some factors that initially gave me a great deal of frustration. Hand-to-hand combat was particularly troublesome. Martian Gothic only sports two manoeuvres - a pathetic general-purpose kick or a grappling technique used for removing unwanted zombies from around your neck. The poor combat system, coupled with the unrelenting immortal zombies and limited save game options, means that parts of the game must be played over and over again. The one saving grace is that the enemy are stupid



The message said to stay alone, Kenzo!

(being predominantly zombies) and will not leave their designated areas to follow you.

Once these flaws are overcome, Martian Gothic becomes increasingly playable as the story begins to develop. The investigative team begins to encounter alien life forms and a mystery that centres on an ancient, evil monstrosity located beneath the base. The puzzles become more complex and creative - one of my favourites was using an inflatable toy to seal a breach in the base's protective wall!

My appreciation of Martian Gothic has only been achieved through long play and determination - after all, I did have a review to write! While rewarding, the game does bear a striking resemblance to Resident Evil 2 - even the mouse is not supported! It is surprising that Talonsoft chose to publish a game like Martian Gothic as it is a complete departure from their war-based quality titles such as Hidden and Dangerous and Jagged Alliance 2. Nevertheless, Martian Gothic should appeal to younger audiences and fans of the Resident Evil genre.

Ryan Hovingh

### extra

<http://www.arcana.com/voodoo/encyclopedia/voodooZ.html>

Zombies are actually real. Haitian witchdoctors can administer a potion (partially composed of a gland from a particular type of frog) that can induce a catatonic state. The victim is assumed dead and buried until the witchdoctor returns three days later to revive him/her. Other drugs are then used to keep them in a semi-conscious state whereby they respond to simple commands and are effective as simple slaves. Of course, everyone else thinks they are the walking dead.



● Genre: Zombie-stomping Action/Adventure ● Players: 1 ● Developer: Creative Reality  
● Publisher: Take 2 Interactive/Talonsoft ● Distributor: Jack of All Games ● Price: \$TBA  
● Available: Now ● Rating: MA ● Need: WIN 95/98, P266, 32MB RAM, 450MB HDD, 4xCD, 4MB 3D Video card (DirectX compatible) ● Want: P500, 64MB RAM, 700MB HDD, 4xCD, 16MB 3D Video card (DirectX compatible) ● URL: [www.talonsoft.com/products/mg.html](http://www.talonsoft.com/products/mg.html)

PCPP

**FOR:** Absorbing storyline. Sense of humour. Great background graphics.

**AGAINST:** Little originality. Limited combat manoeuvres. No mouse support.

57



# ATLANTIS II

In which Cryo discovers there's more to gameplay than pretty pictures.



Myst was certainly a pioneering title. In one fell swoop, a whole new genre was created - albeit most of these games were poor copies. Cryo has made a business out of producing these types of games, arguably with some slightly odd subject matter at times (but I won't get stuck in!). Atlantis II shows a lot of promise, in that the story here is fantastic but entirely comprehensible and quite interesting.



and add to the meditative tone. My only gripe is that you might end up racing through game sections just to get to the next incredible cutscene. I suppose inspiration to play a game in any form is good!

## "...ALMOST A PERVERSE AMOUNT OF INCREDIBLE SCENERY..."

You are Ten, the Light Bearer, and you meet a funny old man in a kooky-looking ship who tells you that it's your destiny to journey to Shambhala... or something. It's all to do with power sources from outer space that ended up in Atlantis and the Atlantides (*Atlantians?* - Ed) decide that it should be split up into Dark and Light, etc. The whole spirit of the game ends up being questing with quasi-religious or mystical overtones. Mixing mysticism with adventure can be perilous at the best of times, but Atlantis II does a reasonable job by not saying too much about the whole affair and leaving the details to your imagination.

### Gobsmacking

Another thing that doesn't hurt is the fact the visuals are STUNNING. There is almost a perverse amount of incredible scenery in this game. This is a big winner because it keeps you entertained while you tussle with the puzzles. The artwork and design generally are really impressive

The controls and menus are suitably low-key and useful - dare I say ubiquitous. The menu screens offer just enough of what is useful to make the game playable (although I would've liked more graphic options than 640x480 and 800x600). The ingame controls are solid. The cursor changes to indicate interaction possibilities and you have a right-click inventory. You can play this game just with the mouse - I love it!

### Going up...

These games have a very specific feel and, hence, audience. They're a little like being stuck in one of those mind, soul and spirit festivals with Enya-esque elevator music coming from the rafters, astrology charts everywhere, lots of incense and someone asking you what it's like being a Scorpio (man?). Sure you have fun for a while - feeling all that love and such - but it's all a bit too right brain for me.

Having said that, Atlantis II is



### extra

[www.ozemail.com.au/~relaxcd](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~relaxcd)  
If you like that hippie new age music, look no further than Australia's own Ken Davis.



definitely a step in the right direction for Cryo. The controls are good, the puzzles are obscure (but not TOO obscure) and the soundtrack is positively new world. The ambience is just right - that passive state of wandering. All the parts make a satisfying whole.

For fans of the genre this is a good title; even for hardened cynics like myself, there's a little appeal here. A solid, if unoriginal, adventure.

John Dewhurst

- Genre: Picturesque Adventure ● Players: 1
- Developer: Cryo Interactive ● Publisher: Cryo Interactive ● Distributor: Hilad
- Price: TBA ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P200 MMX, 32MB RAM, 2MB Videocard ● Want: Nothing special.
- URL: [www.cryo-interactive.com](http://www.cryo-interactive.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Visuals are great, everything works well.

**AGAINST:** Genre-piece, not breaking any ground.

78



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# ALLEGIANCE

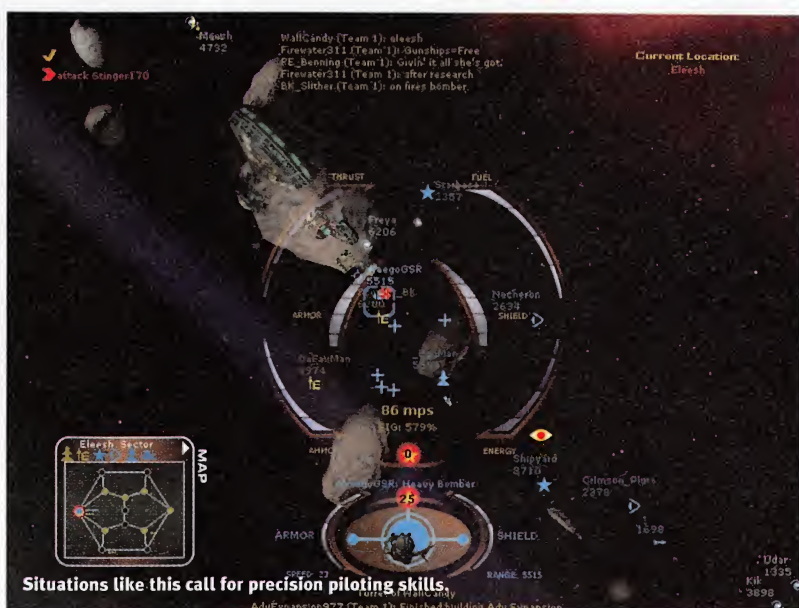
Finished Starlancer yet? Demonstrate your allegiance to Microsoft by checking out the new space shooter at the Zone.

## tips

- Unless you just have to be in charge of things, concentrate on being a pilot until you've come to grips with the environment.
- Give regular updates on your actions to the rest of your team.
- Stay hidden as long as you can. Stowing weapons until they're needed will reduce your signature. Once you're spotted, every enemy can see you on radar.
- Always apply a short booster burst during sharp combat turns. It will increase the turn speed and maintain your velocity.
- Target enemy miners as a priority. If they can't mine He<sub>3</sub>, they can't build ships.
- If you're the commander, monitor your own miners regularly. Make sure you order protection for them, and build new refineries on a just-in-time basis.
- Rear attacks work best. Don't waste too many missiles. Use one to damage shields, then boost in with all guns set to fire.



A little target practice never goes astray.



Situations like this call for precision piloting skills.

It's 2140 and things are looking a little grim for the human race. Okay, more than a little grim. A carelessly misplaced asteroid has destroyed the earth, and the remnants of humanity have split into a number of factions intent on destroying each other. That's about all the premise you need for your average space shooter, after which you can concentrate on blasting anything that hits your radar screen. Fortunately, Allegiance is a cut

above the average, in both concept and execution. Multiplayer-only, Microsoft's latest offering has the potential to be a landmark release, provided the online experience lives up to expectations.

### Fight for helium

Allegiance is an open-ended affair, in which teams (under an elected or self-appointed commander) strive to conquer various sectors of space and destroy enemy factions. A team's success is largely determined by its ability to mine the universe's primary resource, a fuel known as Helium<sub>3</sub> (He<sub>3</sub>), which forms the basis of the new financial system. Given enough assets, industrial complexes can be established, technologies researched and commercial and military fleets commissioned. Each of the four factions (with more to come) has inherent technological strengths and weaknesses, as well as widely

divergent ideologies and objectives.

A solid training tutorial is included that allows key aspects of online play to be practised, although it glosses over some of the detail. Basic flight manoeuvres, navigation and weaponry are all covered, as well as the more strategic role of the commander. Command is not easy (particularly when all of your online teammates are happy to tell you just how lousy you are at it!), so you should concentrate on the shooting bit until your confidence grows. There's not that much to handling yourself at the sharp end, and once into the game you can always hide somewhere and access the help menu, or ask someone over the team chat line. The manual is light on, but the foldout Survival Guide gives you just about everything you need to know once you head out from base.

The Command interface gives you a bird's eye view. A bird in a spacesuit, that is.







Alephs are as mesmerising as they are useful.

### Lacks momentum

Allegiance's online interface is absolutely first class, with a simple click providing a listing of all available games. Pick a game, choose a team to join (even while the game is running), and before you know it you're standing in the hangar ready to configure your own ship or jump into the turret of someone else's. All that's left is to punch the launch button! Once away, the senses are assaulted by fantastic graphics and a wall of sound - orders, distress calls, explosions and your own guns. Your Combat HUD (Head-Up Display) feeds you all the information you need to sort out the environment, including target locations, equipment inventories, and ship's status; while peripheral radar symbols fill you in on what's happening outside your field of view.

**"...THE SENSES ARE ASSAULTED BY FANTASTIC GRAPHICS AND SOUND..."**

Flight control is as simple as pointing in the desired direction and setting the throttle, so as long as you don't expect accurate flight physics (little things, like momentum!), you're in for a great ride. Space combat veterans might be disappointed with the lack of power management, such as balancing energy between guns and shields, and including it as an option would certainly

add to the tactical aspect of the game. Navigation is also very straightforward, based as it is around a series of wormholes or "alephs" that link the various sectors. Point at one, jump through, and you're in the next sector. The whole thing is fast and furious, but the limited range of options might reduce long-term playability. On the other hand, of course, jump in, get killed, and hook straight in again may be just what's needed to balance Allegiance's broader strategic aspects.

### Online ambition

Team interaction is pretty good at present and it will no doubt improve as the online Allegiance community grows. A mini-map display highlights trouble spots, and monitoring the team chat fills you in on most of the details. If the commander directs players to a specific

location, the order can be quickly acknowledged and the autopilot activated. Pre-set transmissions cover most situations, although they tend to wear thin after a while, and sending a message is very simple (voice comms would clearly take this game to the next level). I hadn't seen many real attempts at team strategy at the time of writing this review, but long-term survival will

# GAMES LIST

SELECT A FREE GAME IN THE LIST AND THEN CLICK JOIN GAME

ACCESS	NAME	GAME TIME	SKILL LEVEL	TEAMS	MIN	MAX	PLAYERS	STYLE
	MS GAME 6	1:52	Nov. Only	2	1	16	27/32	Conquest
	MS GAME 4	0:16	Nov. Only	2	1	10	9/30	Conquest
	MS GAME 3	0:43	Any	2	1	16	19/32	Conquest
	MS GAME 1	0:31	Nov. Only	2	1	16	32/32	Conquest
	Name Game	Any	Any	2	1	172		Conquest
	Quisip Gallery (Fast)	Any	Any	2	1	9	0/18	Conquest
	Endo21c	Any	Any	2	1	4	0/9	Conquest
	Kick Ass	Any	Any	2	1	4	0/5	Conquest
	NGL - www.ngl.it	Any	Any	2	1	15	0/32	Conquest
	Lurch's Game	Any	Any	2	1	14	0/32	Conquest
	Terminal's Game	Any	Any	2	1	16	0/32	Conquest
	DarkStar	Any	Any	2	1	8	0/16	Conquest
	Trigon Allegiance	Any	Any	6	1	5	0/30	Death Match
	Trigon Allegiance #2	Any	Any	2	1	16	0/32	Death Match

ZONE GAME
 SQUAD GAME
 NO ACCESS

ALL ACCESS
 WAITING FOR LAUNCH
 GAME IS RUNNING

CONQUEST
 DEATHMATCH
 PROSPERITY

COUNTDOWN
 ASPECTS
 CAPTURE THE FLAG

TECH TALK ON  
 PLAYER STATS  
 COUNT

UNLOCKED  
 LOCKED

## GO ONLINE YOUNG MAN

Online games have to cut it once the meter starts running, and I have to admit that despite a few minor glitches, Allegiance lives up to the hype that has surrounded its release. My experience at the MSN Gaming Zone was a little mixed, ranging from a couple of hours of largely lag-free excitement, to annoyingly regular dropouts because my "ping wasn't being returned." On balance though, it was fast, exciting and spectacular, with the involvement of real people adding a whole new dimension to the action in a way that AI never can. Microsoft also offers a subscription service - the Allegiance Zone - that includes additional arenas, persistent player rankings, player profiles and special events. There's no doubt that paying up once a month will be the only way to experience Allegiance's full potential, but the free service is definitely worth the box price.

no doubt force teams down that road.

In many respects, Allegiance is a great game. It looks and sounds outstanding, it's simple to play, and it offers a high quality online experience. On the surface it's a 3D shooter (certainly more so than a simulation), but at heart it has a lot of depth. He3 must be mined, bases built, and technology exploited - all of which demand long-term team work in a way that most similar games don't. I'm not convinced that the universe provided in the non-subscription Zone is big enough for such long-term development, or that the shooter aspect has enough in it to stand alone, but this is definitely one to watch.

Major Des McNicholas

## extra

Star Trek! The original and the best. Take to the stars with James T Kirk and his winning smile. Use ultra high technology to defeat the aliens or just roll up your sleeves and punch them in the nose!



- Genre: Space Combat & Strategy ● Players: 1-32 (Free Zone)
- Developer: Microsoft ● Publisher: Microsoft ● Distributor: Microsoft
- Price: \$89-95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: TBA
- Need: P266, 32MB RAM, 270MB HDD 3D Videocard (D3D), Modem
- Want: PIII 450, 128MB RAM ● URL: [www.microsoft.com/games/allegiance](http://www.microsoft.com/games/allegiance)

**PCPP** **FOR:** Simple interface, excellent graphics, and feeling of immersion in a team environment.  
**AGAINST:** Some glitches with MSN Gaming Zone and arguably a limited game area.

**81**

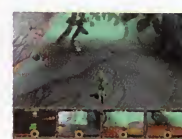
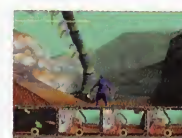


# EVOLVA

Sci Fi action with a touch of Darwinism

## tips

Commanding a team of Genohunters with mixed attributes is important. When selecting mutations, try to make each Genohunter at least slightly different. Electing to have each 'hunter specialise in a particular field is ideal. Bulky characters should be imbued with a maximum of combat abilities, while those who are better suited to situations requiring speed and agility should be mutated accordingly. Keep a close eye on the positions of your fellow Genohunters at all times, especially when in close proximity to exploding plants. It's very easy to run through patches of these and escape unscathed, but your compatriots trailing behind you won't be so lucky.



Hey, everyone, it's the Avatar!



Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen.

Exploding plants take their toll.



More life threatening than a rugby scrum.



The rapid progress made by those organisations involved in the Human Genome Project has resulted in an increased societal awareness of the basics of genetics and the possible applications and consequences of genetic modification. As the project itself draws to a close, procedures like cloning and genetic engineering have further permeated the psyche of the general public. It is therefore puzzling that few games focusing on such concepts have been created in the past few years.

Computer Artworks, a company famous for its breathtaking screensavers, has delved into the world of game development and come up with a title based on one of the most intriguing and original game designs ever conceived. *Evolve* focuses on the endeavours of the Genohunters: a unique race of bipedal aliens able to absorb genetic material

from slain foes, thus taking on their traits. According to the game's story line, a group of five Genohunters, watching intently from the safety of their orbiting spacecraft, observe the planet below them being overrun by the tendrils of an enormous plant. Rather than stand idly by as the plant drastically alters the planet to suit its own metabolic requirements, the Genohunters take it upon themselves to rid the dying planet of the virulent parasite. Thus, four of the altruistic creatures are deployed to the planet's surface, while one of them remains in the spacecraft. The player assumes the role of the orbiting Genohunter, controlling individual members of the away team from a thirdperson perspective.

## Spitting fire?

In response to the Genohunters' quest to destroy it, the plant manufactures a





Caverns: an integral part of any action game.



## THE THINKING MAN'S NAVIGATOR

Evolva's navigation system is, without doubt, the most intuitive in existence. In contrast to standard directional pointers, the 'intelligent' waypoint arrow behaves in a dynamic fashion. Rather than simply ignoring obstructions like cliff faces and impassable ravines, it directs the player around these; simultaneously keeping them headed in the right direction. Control over the other three Genohunters is also quite simple. The player can switch between control of individual Genohunters with the press of a button, and issue simple commands like 'guard' and 'attack' in a similar fashion. Streamlined, yet flawlessly efficient, interfaces like Evolva's are a welcome change from the established norm.



Mardi Gras was off to a good start.



The mutation menu is simple to use.

wide variety of hostile creatures tasked with the annihilation of the polymorphous protagonists. These increasingly powerful abominations oppose the player at every turn, making combat a frantic and frequently terminal affair. As genetic material is absorbed, the player can choose to distribute it in an RPG-like fashion, enhancing specific aspects of each Genohunter. Increased strength and agility are relatively basic adaptations, allowing the player to attack with greater potency and leap further respectively. Advanced capabilities like fire and lightening attacks become available later in the game. While they are much

B, with the player despatching numerous adversaries on the way. Other straightforward objectives like the protection of fauna vital to the planet's survival confer some semblance of variation, but do little to alter the basic gameplay formula.

### Barren wastelands

The game's visuals, one of its supposed drawcards, are rather disappointing. The suitably organic landscapes are bland and quickly become tiresome to look at, and the planet itself is by no means a thriving ecosystem teeming with life. Which begs the

any creature that would dare oppose them.

In spite of these deficiencies, Evolva is still an enjoyable game. Though definitely not the kind that will keep intellectuals entertained for any length of time, it serves its purpose as an action title well. It is somewhat unfortunate that Computer Artworks didn't take the concept of genetic alteration further: instantaneous mutations induced by downed assailants would have introduced an interesting element of strategy to the prohibitively linear proceedings. And complete freedom to explore the world, as opposed to a restrictive mission system, would have added immeasurably to the game's immersion factor and longterm value. But for those looking for some action-oriented combat with a twist, Evolva may just be what they're looking for.

Brett Robinson

## "TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE OF AGILE AND VICIOUS PREDATORS..."

appreciated for their increased efficiency in dealing with enemies, these attacks in particular seem rather uninspired, even trite. In a game based around relatively plausible genetic principles, elemental attacks seem far-fetched, and distinctly out of place.

Evolva's basis on genetic mutation would conceivably lend it a dynamic and open-ended quality. Unfortunately, the game is mission based and completed in a rather linear fashion. Most missions involve navigation from point A to point

question, why save the planet at all? Equally unimpressive is Evolva's audio. Save for a peculiar grunt uttered when they sustain damage, the Genohunters remain completely silent, even when battling adversaries superior in strength and numbers. The game's graphical saving grace is the appearance of the Genohunters themselves, who become increasingly formidable looking as the player progresses. Eventually, they take on the appearance of agile and vicious, yet majestic, predators capable of eviscerating

## extra

Biohazard by Ken Alibek  
A terrifying insight into Russia's biological warfare program involving the genetic manipulation of pandemic viruses. Ken Alibek defected to the US after heading the program for over a decade.



- Genre: Action ● Players: 1-4
- Developer: Computer Artworks ● Publisher: Interplay ● Distributor: Ozisoft
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: Now ● Rating: M
- Need: P233, 32MB RAM, 200MB HDD
- Want: P1400, 64MB RAM, 500MB HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D) ● URL: [www.evolva.com](http://www.evolva.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** A refreshingly unique concept, near flawless interface and a spectacular cut scenes.

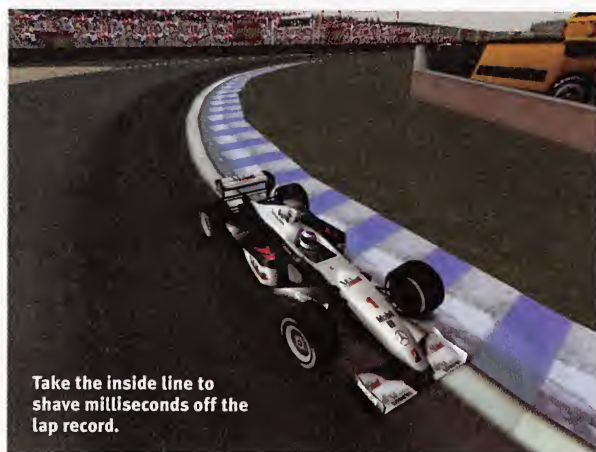
**AGAINST:** Gameplay that doesn't really live up to its potential, lacklustre graphics.

71



# F1 2000

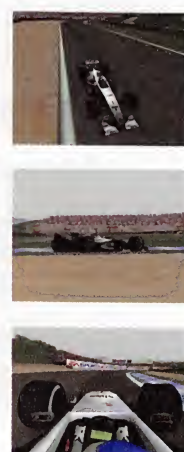
EA Sports tries to beat Grand Prix 3 off the line. Unfortunately, there's a ten second penalty for jumping the start...



Take the inside line to shave milliseconds off the lap record.



"Get off the bonnet, you bloody idiot!"



The crème de la crème of motor sports is back in yet another guise. EA Sports has continued with the trend that will eventually see them the proud developers of a game for just about every sport possible! I'm sure Lawn Bowls 2000 and Synchronised Swimming 2001 are just around the corner, but in the meantime a more conventional sport is set to grace the home PC.

I wish I could say F1 2000 blew me away, and I wish I could say our long F1-less sojourn is at an end, but alas, EA has again come through with a product that lacks soul. It would seem that EA noticed a gap in the release schedule and decided to knock together a game to fill it. Don't get the wrong idea though, as F1 2000 does,

comes to the crunch, F1 2000 has buckets loads of potential that never made it to the release. The car can be piloted in number of different modes, from training and single weekend events to the fully-fledged sixteen-race championship season. Based on the 2000 Formula One season, and with an official licence under its belt, all the teams and drivers of the 2000 season are present. Even long time simulation outcast Jacques Villeneuve makes an appearance for the first "virtual" time ever in the middleweight, and oddly coloured, BAR team.

## Slot cars

The on track action isn't particularly spectacular, and is in line with the supposed "state-of-the-art" 3D graphics



Formula One has cameras everywhere. Here's the Sandpit Cam.

## "...BARBIE DOLLS HELP PROTECT THE LUCKY DRIVERS FROM THE SUN..."

thankfully, contain some redeeming features.

## Umbrellas

The intro movie - which is generally a trademark when it comes to EA Sports titles - lasts a measly twenty seconds, and looks much like an afterthought in development rather than a tool for setting the tone. The user interface screens each don an F1-esque background, all of which incorporate (and I do mean all) pictures of those Barbie dolls that flock to F1 events all over the world to help protect the lucky drivers from the sun and rain with their expert umbrella holding techniques.

Dynamite in the field of expectations, but sadly lacking when it

engine. All the circuits are representative of the real thing to a certain degree, but when compared to the high standards of today, are sorely lacking. The cars also tend to resemble something we should have seen a few years ago, have no right being in a title aligned with the year 2000.

Probably the most disappointing feature by a long shot is the dismal AI drivers. At every track, their behaviour is almost completely linear and pre-processed. Their driving gives the player a feeling of being on a slot car track as they will often barge without any warning what so ever.

There is a saving grace however, and it comes in the form of the vehicle physics. Now without ever actually having taken a spin in an F1 vehicle

myself, it's difficult to judge the experience accurately. But when sitting in the virtual cockpit, screaming around the Albert Park circuit, the feeling of piloting an F1 vehicle really is present. If it were not for the pitiful AI and very average graphics, the experience, I imagine, would be very close to the real thing!

EA Sports hasn't really set any benchmarks with F1 2000, and with Grand Prix 3 just around the corner, I suggest fans ask to "try before they buy". I expect many will come away disappointed.

Edward Fox

## extra

<http://www.gp3.com>  
The Holy Grail of F1 sims... This is the one you should be waiting for!



- Genre: F1 Simulation ● Players: 1-8
- Developer: EA Sports ● Publisher: EA Sports ● Distributor: EA Sports
- Price: TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: G
- Need: P-233, 32MB RAM, 300 HDD, 4xCD ● Want: PII-350, 64MB RAM, 2.1GB HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D, Glide) 8xCD ● URL: [www.easports.com](http://www.easports.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Neat physics engine. Based on an F1 season that hasn't finished! Umbrella babes all over the user interface.

**AGAINST:** Visuals are poor, audio is crap, and the AI drivers are all morons.

65



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5014039

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5014077

# Harvey Norman

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# GUNSHIP!

The latest helo sim from Microprose allows you to brush up on your back seat driving technique.

## tips

- Make the most of your planning time. Look for covered routes and don't designate BPs (Battle Positions) directly over your targets. Your weapons have plenty of range to engage at a distance.
- Switch to thermal sights every so often. In daylight they will still give away any vehicle with a heat source that may be hiding behind trees or light cover.
- Use the "pop-up" technique for all engagements. Move to cover, pop up, engage, and head back down.
- As the pilot, concentrate on lining up on the gunners aiming mark, but keep a lookout for potential threats (use joystick button 2 to pan around). Keep your altitude as low as possible.
- As the gunner, remember to direct the pilot to cover every 30 seconds or so. You're a big target!
- You may encounter attractive targets of opportunity on route to your primary target. If you can kill them quickly, without losing time, then do so, but remember you mission objectives. No points if you're too late or out of ammo!

The local mechanic would have a lot to answer for.



The ORT allows the CP/G to target distant enemies from the safety of cover.

During a recent Retroversion (PCPP #43), I waxed lyrical about the joys of Microprose's classic *Mt Tank Platoon II*. It was a game that seemed to bring everything together in just the right mix - realism, gameplay, graphics and fun. Not surprisingly, *Gunship!* has much the same feel to it, and while time will tell if the long promised compatibility with the impending *Tank Platoon!* works out, Microprose's latest offering stands pretty well on its own. I'm not convinced that it lives up to the "most realistic helicopter combat simulation on the market" hype, but it's far and away the most playable.

## Fly Now!

*Gunship!* puts you in the pilot's or gunner's seat of a modern attack helicopter. Three choppers are available to choose from, including the AH-64 Apache, the Eurocopter Tiger, and the Mi-28 Havoc. Fly Now missions offer fast, random action, or players can opt for a number of single missions or campaigns based around a European theatre of war. All can be played in multiplayer mode, and you can elect to fight for the US, Germany, the UK or Mother Russia. A highly configurable Battle Builder completes an impressive range of options, and the proposed link with *Tank Platoon!* should also extend the life of this game.

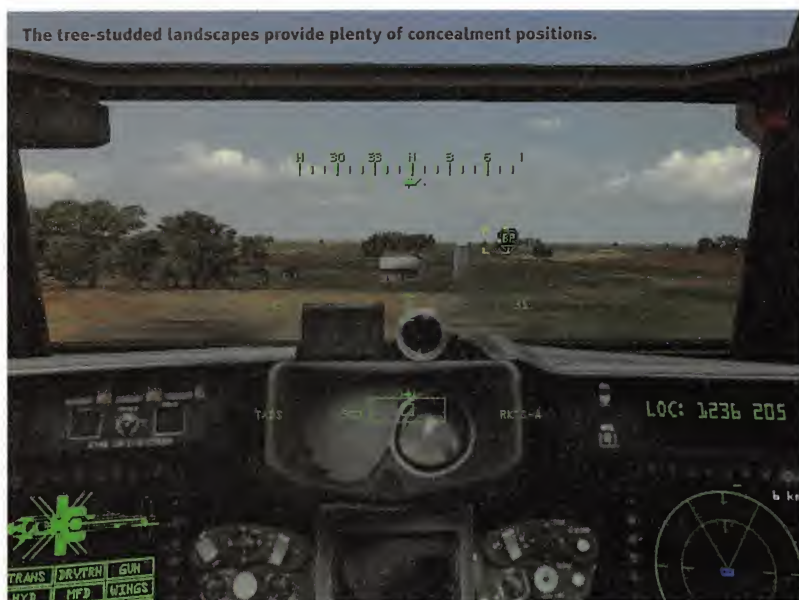
The game is very easy to climb into. Veterans of Microprose's earlier releases will see many similarities in the overall interface, and anyone with some helo sim experience will be taking out tanks in the first few minutes. A lot of effort has gone into easing the learning curve, and the training programme is a standout feature

of the game (yes, it's back to Fort Rucker!). Basic practice missions are preceded by animated demonstrations and supported by an onboard flight instructor. Think *Comanche 3* and you've got the general idea of the approach to training, but add a far more comprehensive range of weapons tutorials and the need to master life in the back seat.

## Coordinate

Mission planning is half the challenge in games like this, and *Gunship!* takes you through the process in a fairly painless and straightforward manner. The pre-flight briefing outlines the objectives and any restrictions under which you must operate, details the last known locations of friendly and enemy forces, and provides a weather forecast. Armed with that information, you can assign crews, determine weapon loadouts, and produce a tactical plan for the mission. Waypoints can be specified, actions assigned for various stages of the flight, and flight profiles ordered. The





various options within the planning screen give players a great deal of control over the way things pan out, permitting genuine coordination of the forces at your disposal. Once the mission is underway, the map can be called up to make critical changes, and new orders can be passed to other aircraft through a simple communications menu.

As a flight sim, Gunship! offers a good time in the pilot's seat, with almost everything accessed through a configurable joystick. The flight model seems sound, although some hardcore enthusiasts may be a little disappointed with the limited degree of interaction in



### Cooperate

For my money, Gunship! is all about back seat driving. It's the gunner's job to find and destroy targets, while the pilot worries about becoming a target. A modern attack helo carries an amazing array of targeting and engagement systems, but the human eye and fast reactions can also mean the difference between life and death. The gunner's cockpit in Gunship! models all of this beautifully, as you come to grips with the

## "FAST REACTIONS CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH"

the cockpit. A full range of MFDs (Multi Function Displays) are available, but there aren't many buttons to press, and the presence of a gunner means that the non-flying workload is reduced compared to single seat helos. Having said that, the manual stresses that the pilot's role is to "...navigate into hostile territory, close on enemy forces, and provide a stable firing platform," and you do have the opportunity to take control of guns and rockets if necessary.

ORT (Optical Relay Tube), the FCR (Fire Control Radar), the TADS (Target Acquisition and Detection System), and your IHADS (Integrated Helmet and Display Sight System). While you crack on with the job of destroying ground and air targets, a series of simple keystrokes enable you to give the pilot instructions to help line up the shot. Options include varying speed, controlling facing, pop-up and break to cover. In the absence of any orders, the pilot will conform to the flight plan specified at the start of the mission.



## MATCH THE WEAPON TO THE TARGET

Modern attack helos carry an awesome array of firepower, all of which can inflict significant damage to most target types. They're also awesomely expensive, so don't waste a missile when a bullet will do the job!

\*30mm Cannon (F5): Quick, easy to use, and effective against troops, bunkers and light armour. Can also cause critical damage to heavier vehicles. Range about 1 km.

\*Rockets (F6): Effective against soft and medium targets out to 3 km. Unguided, but the salvo technique covers a large area. Always take a mix of warhead types.

\*ATGM (Anti-Tank Guided Missiles) (F7): Very effective against armour from several km. You can lock onto a target before launch (LOBL) or after launch (LOAL). LOBL is quick and easy, but it leaves you exposed, whereas LOAL lets you fire, duck behind cover, then pop up to lock the target in the last few seconds of missile flight.



On the face of it, Gunship! is an excellent entry level flight sim, but one that offers a lot more than a straight flying experience. Microprose has stressed the fact that the aim has been to simulate the entire battlefield experience, rather than just the view from the pilot's seat. It's been an admirable success, and there's no doubt that Gunship! offers the best cooperative (pilot/gunner) gaming I've seen so far. If this is a taste of what's to come from Microprose's AirLand Battle System, then we have a lot to look forward to!

Major Des McNicholas

### extra

Visit the US Army Aviation Centre at Fort Rucker and find out how they do this for real! Command lists, course information, and the latest developments in helo combat are all on hand.



- Genre: Attack Helo Battlefield Sim ● Players: 1-16
- Developer: Microprose ● Publisher: Hasbro Interactive ● Distributor: Hasbro Interactive
- Price: \$89-95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P266, 64MB RAM, 260MB HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D) ● Want: PII 266, 128MB RAM
- URL: [www.gunship.com](http://www.gunship.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Great training package, simple interface, and clever pilot AI. Looks good and flies well.

**AGAINST:** Limited operational area and some minor confusion in the comms and waypoint menus.

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# ASHERON'S CALL

Dereth (sic) you accept the call?

## tips

Meet people. Join up with them. Chat. Form adventuring bands. The point of online games is doing so, which means you shy bunny wallflowers won't get much out of the game. And some of the monsters are downright savage, so if nothing else, you'll just need the help.



Goin' huntin' for Bill



Massively multiplayer online games are without a doubt the way of the future. With so many companies lined up to release their own shared world, suddenly the bar has been raised. So, it was with great curiosity we viewed Asheron's Call. After all, they are the new cats on this fast growing block.

## Nasty Insects

Asheron's Call has an intriguing and detailed premise. Centuries ago, a mighty race know as the Emypyrean were threatened by nightmarish insect creatures known as the Olthoi. These vicious monsters defeated the empire and forced them to bolt to extradimensional safe houses. Leaving portals open to various parts of the world created by the mage Asheron, the call to heroes has gone out (hence the game title, witty eh?). The time to reclaim the world from the vicious beasts and evil races has come.

Obviously, this is where you come in. As one of a legion of doughty heroes, you come alone into the world, and from there can either go it alone, or team up with one of the several thousand people routinely logging in to Dereth. But that's

all pretty simple stuff. You know how multiplayers work. You join a guild, find some guys who want to go on an adventure, go kill a dragon or whatever. Building a bit of a reputation is important, as is surviving the assaults of the ever irritating Player Killers. But believe it or not, Asheron's call has something that is very, very different from the other games. Plot. Yep, you heard it first. There is indeed an overall story in the world of Dereth, controlled both by interactive player decisions and by programmers from Turbine, who keep throwing challenges at the world. Armies of Shadow attacks, mysterious castles in the air, all of these things change the world and actually allow you to become famous and respected within the world.

This is really what the big online games needed. Certainly Ultima Online has suffered from a certain direction-less malaise, having a big community, but not much to do aside from dungeon and player bashish. Having something to strive against adds a mythic element that games, especially those within the fantasy genre, lack. And, hell, it's pretty damn cool when you and four other players join





(above) Our beloved Christian keeps with his disposition towards funky head-dress.

up to hold your town against a nation wide assault from whatever hell creature is out to get you, then getting together and bragging about it.

## Icing

Groovy plot devices are just the icing on the cake. Down into the guts of the thing (to mix a metaphor), we find that Asheron's Call has what it takes to keep you entertained. The graphic elements hold to a Keep It Simple, Stupid rule. There is not much that is incredibly flashy here, but it is all solid and holds the eye. Landscapes are varied and compelling, certainly being unique in the

available to your character. It's relatively basic, without much in the way of tactical thinking involved, but it lends itself very much to the idea that combat is best when multiple participants are involved. It might be basic, sure, but even the lowest level monsters can be a problem after the third or fourth combat. For that matter, the interface is equally uncomplicated, using the standard RPG interface of a quick backpack menu and a skill development tree. That's not to say that it is in any way overly simplistic, but a long, drawn out form of combat is really not what you want out of the game.

What you really want out of an online

**"...THREATENED BY NIGHTMARISH INSECT CREATURES..."**

whitewashed wasteland of semi-medieval inspired RPGs. The architecture is high fantasy and never gets dull, with dungeons and cities being elaborate things. And, best of all, the world is huge. You'll literally spend hours travelling to get to major towns, through dangerous and differing kinds of territory.

Combat is pretty simple. Put a weapon in your hand, and select low, high or medium shots or the spells that you currently have in your spell book, and other skills and modifiers that are

game is a distinct lack of lag, which so far, certainly I've not been plagued with. It's not perfect, and it can get irritating, but it is definitely head and shoulder above, for instance, pre-Australasian Shard Ultima Online.

## Reliable fun

Asheron's Call is about cooperation, and surprisingly, has so far been a friendly and welcoming environment. NO one is so naive as to suggest that all the happy online gamers have come to the



land of Dereth, but perhaps the role of outside produced and sponsored plots have given the nefarious game spoiling PK's something to do aside from picking on people. For no other reason than this, the game world is the best environment you could find online. It's interesting, with lots of stuff to do and good folk. It's perhaps not the best gaming experience you'll have, but it's one of the best shared worlds you'll find.

Christian Read

**extra**

[www.thezone.com](http://www.thezone.com), You have to play this through The Zone, something which most of you online gamers will already be familiar with. Like the Empire or not, Microsoft have provided a stable and secure way to play with gamers the world over. It's ten bucks a month to play Asheron's but is certainly worth it. Also, you may care to read [www.tadwilliams.com](http://www.tadwilliams.com) books Otherland. They take the concept of online gaming to exciting new heights.

- Genre: Fantasy ● Players: 1- lots and lots
- Developer: Turbine ● Publisher: Microsoft ● Distributor: Microsoft
- Price: \$79.95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P166, 32MB RAM, 270MB HD, Internet ● Want: PII, 64MB RAM, 3D Video Card
- URL: [www.thezone.com](http://www.thezone.com)

**PCPP**

**FOR:** Fantastic game world, easy to play, great plots, good people.

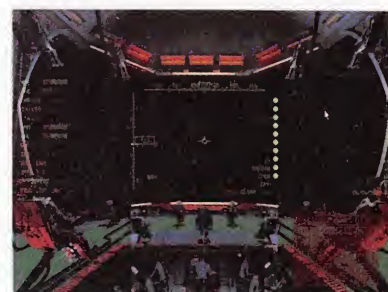
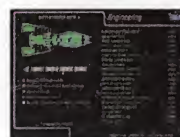
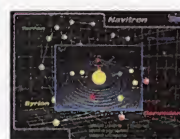
**AGAINST:** Perhaps overly simple, especially in comparison to a game like UO.

88



# BATTLECRUISER 3000

The full title is actually Battlecruiser 3000 A.D. V2.08 (A Derek Smart Simulation). Which is almost as long as the game's taken to develop.



The title for this space combat simulation game is quite a mouthful, a level of wordiness perhaps more befitting the latest Street Fighter release. It comes from a long and convoluted history steeped in infamy, back in the mid 90s when Gametek seemed bent on single-handedly destroying the space combat genre. They ruined Frontier and they butchered First Encounters, but their most spectacular

Trek, they're constantly shifting and changing their alliances, but unlike Star Trek this process is modeled by plausible, scientific means. Behind the scenes are artificial intelligence routines called "actors," which allegedly conspire to make no two games in this massively complex universe the same.

You pilot a battlecruiser, a space warship bristling with weaponry and capable of launching up to four fighters.

## "YOU CAN FIGHT, TRADE, OR EVEN FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS"

snafu was over Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation).

At the time of its first release in '96, the game sold was unplayable. Literally. Menu functions didn't work, missions were missing, and the overall package spoke of an utter contempt for quality control. Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation) (Er, James, BC3K will do, you know - Ed) left a lot of people with burnt fingers, and for years the game was synonymous with the contempt game producers hold for their paying public.

### Better Late Than Never?

Now, after much legal wrangling and code rewriting, Derek Smart not only has the legal rights to his baby back, he's satisfied that it's the true, divine interpretation of his vision. So just what is Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation)? Set a thousand years in the future, Mankind has spread its influence into a cosmos full of hostile, humanoid alien races. Like the superpowers in Star

You have explicit control over the most minute details of your ship and crew, and dozens of star systems in which you can fight, trade, or even follow your orders. It offers a free exploration mode, the option of fighting scripted campaigns, or a mindless shoot-em-up using the game engine, and is yet another contender for the mantle of the perfect space combat/trading game.

But Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation) is hardly another Elite. Reading the manual, penned by Mr Smart (Ph.D) himself, one can't help but balk at the cheap-arse sci-fi universe he's come up with. The text is riddled with cliches and grammatical errors, and while you can appreciate the trouble he's gone to, that fact that he couldn't stoop to having someone else proofread his work shows that he's more a David Braben than an Ian Bell.

### Shop Smart: Shop Derek Smart

Despite all of these concerns,

Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation) (Sigh - Ed) does actually have a couple of things going for it. The game really is an immensely complex and deep exercise in space simulation, and once you overcome the language barrier posed by the incredibly complex controls there is a vast universe to get lost in.

Then there's the matter of system resources. Since this game was conceived the better part of a decade ago, the chances of your system not being able to handle the meagre requirements demanded are slim. This is what you'd call a bare bones, if not a bare knuckle space combat experience. If you can get over the fact the guy who wrote this is an egomaniac of John Romero proportions, then Battlecruiser 3000AD (A Derek Smart Simulation) is a rare glimpse into the infinite.

James Cottee

**extra**

[www.somethingawful.com](http://www.somethingawful.com)

Jeff K has a very similar personality to Derek Smart.

● Genre: Space Combat ● Players: 1  
● Developer: 3000 AD ● Publisher: Jack Of All Games ● Distributor: Jack Of All Games  
● Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: G 8+  
● Need: P166, 16MB RAM, 100MD HDD, 2xCD, 2MB Videocard ● Want: P200, 32MB RAM, 165MB HDD, 3D Videocard (Glide) ● URL: [www.bc3000ad.com](http://www.bc3000ad.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Vast, complex, unpredictable and CPU-friendly space epic.

**AGAINST:** Looks incredibly dated, game designer would appear to have a mental age of 14.

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# MILLENNIUM RACER

Thumpin' techno racers no longer belong to the consoles



The first thing that comes to mind when playing Millennium Racers is that it looks suspiciously similar to Wipeout. The format is the same, the background and tracks familiar, and the gravity defying wheel-less bikes quite imitable of the classic racer. It even has a funky soundtrack, but the surprising thing is that Millennium Racer is also a great game.

## 3000AD

Millennium Racers is set in the third millennium, where speed is a vital commodity of information transmission on the net. Uh-huh. You race as your cyber self, on your cyber bike, on a cyber track. Do I smell a cliché on its way?

On the upside of this title, the tracks are fast and smooth, with various power ups to speed you along your way. There are short cuts and boosts available at the hit of a key; instead of the more popular 'activation after running over a certain icon' method.

scenery usually associated with racing games.

Millennium Racers' allows you to race AI or your own player profiles - a kind of ghost of your past experiences on the track, or race up to seven others online via LAN or the net. The gameplay is fast and VERY smooth with believable reaction time to movement, steering and collisions - a factor missing in so many other PC racing titles. Above all it's challenging, but not too much so that you want to just give up on the whole thing.

## Pure racing

On the down side, this is purely a race of skill and speed, sadly devoid of any weapons to slow down your opponents with. There are only four motor types to choose from, each with its pro's and con's - you get speed but you give up handling or your acceleration time is low but your top speed is high.

MR is quite the basic racer to play,

advancement to the next track. Upgrade options are also sorely absent from Millennium Racers.

But these factors can also be seen to enhance the games appeal. It's simple, to the point, no nonsense speed junky racing with great graphics and a smooth interface. More would have been great - perhaps a few weapons, some bike upgrades and a story line to make you want to go the distance and come out number one. The lack of these devices doesn't mean that MR isn't great fun to play. On the contrary, it is.

Agata Budinska

**"IT'S SIMPLE, NO NONSENSE SPEED JUNKY RACING..."**

There are plenty of obstacles to avoid, from rocks and tight corridors to an absence of track to fall into the depths of space. The cyber environment also lends quite a clean theme to the game's graphics. Backgrounds are smooth, devoid of blocky trees and unrealistic cardboard cut outs of people and

with only a few options in customisation. With exception to the thinly outlined premise of the game, there's nothing compelling to see you through to the later stages of the game. No plot, no cut scenes and no real prizes for your speedy performance, except of course the all-important

## extra

<http://www.crinis.com/users/aforte/features/tron/index.html>  
The Tron Gallery - the classic film of speeding bikes set in the future



- Genre: Futuristic racer ● Players: 1 - 8
- Developer: Creat Studio ● Publisher: Cyro Interactive ● Distributor: ???
- Price: 1BA ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P200 MMX, 32 MB 2D/3D card Win 95/98 (not compatible Win NT or Pentium Pro)
- Want: PII 300, 64 MB 2D/3D card ● URL: [www.cyro-interactive.com](http://www.cyro-interactive.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Lot's of fast, smooth fun with reliable handling and excellent gameplay.

**AGAINST:** Not much to it, no weapons or plot.

**70**



# ROLLCAGE STAGE II

The name gives the game away. This isn't so much a sequel as a new collection of tracks.



The action racing genre has always been a fairly distant relative of racing sims. This is true for the serious simulation games as well as the more leisurely street car variety. These futuristic, sleek, techno-sounding games seem miles away from most other racing titles, with features like ridiculous speeds, powerups, weapons et al. The original Rollcage was as close to a PC version of Wipeout as we were likely to get and it was a bloody good play (90%, PCPP#38). Well, the spirit of speed and paranoid futurism continues in Rollcage Stage II, with only a few improvements.

## On the ceiling

In this type of game where arguably anything goes, I find it a little depressing that developers seem to have run out of ideas - little has been added to the Rollcage



you with a race-leader-rocket just before you hit the line. Waves of frustration to punish every gamer! You can now choose the Total Racing option that awards rankings according to a variety of criteria. These include how many buildings you destroy, race positions at the end of each lap as well as the fastest lap time. This will limit the randomness of play. But if you prefer to live dangerously, Classic Rollcage is still available.

## "...SOME FOOL GETS YOU WITH A RACE-LEADER-ROCKET BEFORE THE LINE..."

experience in this sequel of sorts. Graphically updated but looking and feeling suspiciously familiar, Rollcage II offers more zero gravity roof-racing. There are now a lot more cars on offer (around twenty) and there are some more options for styles of play - single player: arcade, league games and scramble; and a variety of multiplayer games. This definitely injects some longevity in the sequel.

One of the problems of the original Rollcage was the way that good driving wasn't always rewarded. You might come first in every race of the championships, but for the last race where some fool gets

## It's a buzz

The racing itself is as fast as ever and I get a buzz out of it, I must say. Like the original, the enjoyment is not so much in the control of the cars or the tracks themselves, but in the awesome speed and the problems created by it. The less familiar a track the better, since it's the surprise that gives you the kick.

The style of the game, much like its predecessors, is shooting for that ultra-hip young adult audience with electronic music and swish design (John is your grandad, kids! - Ed). It doesn't quite hit

## extra

**Duel**  
If you want to see a classic in the scary car genre, look no further than Spielberg's first feature. Made as a telemovie but theatrically released, it shows you why Spielberg is where he is today.



the mark. The music is really quite bland and repetitive, and there aren't any standout tracks. The whole selection sounds like any other boring Europop techno act. The visuals are well done and the menus are useful and easy to access, and in the end this is what really counts. I just turned that music off quick smart.

Rollcage Stage II is more of an update than anything else; the tracks and vehicles are new, but everything feels a little familiar. This is not really a new experience, it's more or less the same old Rollcage that we know and love. We get more breakneck Rollcage action, with a few new features and that's certainly not a bad thing. Pity about the soundtrack, though.

John Dewhurst

- Genre: Powered-up Action Racer ● Players: 1-5
- Developer: Attention To Detail ● Publisher: Psygnosis ● Distributor: Jack of all Games
- Price: TBA ● Available: Now ● Rating: G8
- Need: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D Videocard ● Want: PII 450, 128MB RAM, 190MB HDD
- URL: [www.rollcage-game.com](http://www.rollcage-game.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** More cars, more tracks, more options - same old Rollcage goodness.

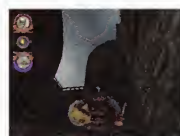
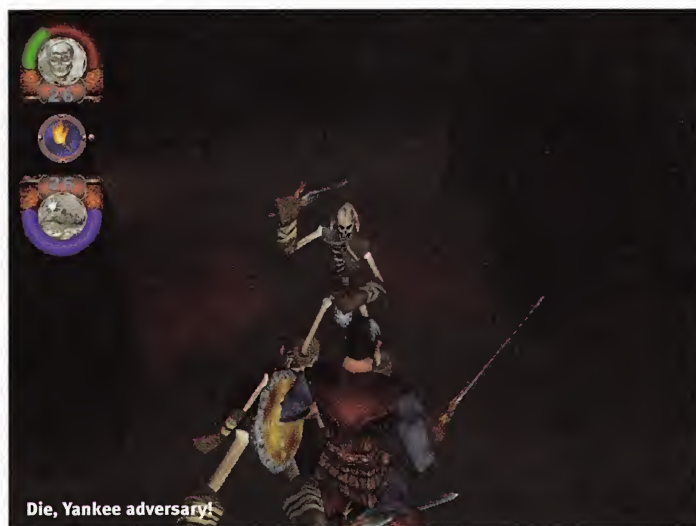
**AGAINST:** More of the same, music is bordering on the abysmal.

80



# CRUSADERS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

Budget voice actors mar an otherwise creditable new direction for the Might & Magic series.



Crusaders of Might and Magic is an interesting game. It's an amalgam between first and thirdperson gaming using a Quake 3 style interface and focusing not on extreme distance combat but rather making it up close and personal. The main character, Drake, is armed with sword and shield and the odd spell. Wanna kill someone? Get up close - just don't think about rocket launchers and shotguns.

The game is pretty simple in plot. The evil necromancer dude Necros wants to take over the world for no particular reason. Therefore he raises a legion of the

from ground level to directly overhead. It's an interesting idea, and the changing viewpoint can certainly become a part of your tactical arrangements. Fight one skeleton in front of you and it does not matter where you put the camera, but if you are surrounded by three of the buggers, you'll want to have a good view of the overall environment. The outstanding problem is manoeuvrability. While the viewing perspective is more than adequate, the fine moving and turning can be tricky. You can't spin, but rather have to carefully sidestep. The character could stand to be a bit faster as well.

**"DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOUR SWORD HITS THE ROOF."**

dead and marches around the world conquering stuff. Then he gets lucky and defeats the Crusaders, the mighty armies of the land. Drake, the chosen one of prophecy, must kill the bad guys and reunite the Crusaders under the command of the enchantress Celestia.

## Buggers

Gameplay is Crusaders is rather unique, actually. The mouse controls the sword and shield combinations and also the camera, which floats around Drake

The one great flaw in this interesting interface is your lack of ability to move with a mouse. The mixture of mouse and keyboard is a delicate one, and the movements can be a tad disorienting. One thing that stands out as a particularly poor design is the right and left shield sword combos. The right mouse controls the left hand a vice versa which sends odd signals to your brain.

## Pleasing mix

Interface concerns aside, Crusaders

looks wonderful. It's got high specs and it uses the extra grunt to the full. Game environments are very, very big and the roving camera is allowed to fully examine the world. The dungeons are beautifully squalid and the shadows/light programs are exemplary. The monsters are well animated, are fast and fight with various styles that force you to adapt tactics. Spells are beautiful to gaze on. Game physics are subtle and clever. In an archway and are thinking about an overhead slash? Don't be surprised if your sword hits the roof.

Sound is up to scratch in every way. Stereo effects, the ambient effects, the usual are all up there but then it throws many of the brownie points it earns here by including some of the worst voice acting you'll encounter in a game. Wooden delivery in harsh North American accents is a thing of the past. It sticks out here like the proverbial sore thumb.

Although it does have a few flaws, Crusaders is certainly interesting and when the action comes, it's fast, furious, challenging and fun. Make sure your PC has the specs and have a look if you want a compelling mix of action and RPG style gaming.

Christian Read

## extra

<http://www.artsci.gmcc.ab.ca/people/einarsson/elocation.htm>  
It the little things that get to you. Like voice actors with poor elocation skills. Read up on elocation theory here - though be prepared! Lotsa text and bugger all flash.

- Genre: RPG Hack and Slash ● Players: 1
- Developer: 3DO ● Publisher: 3DO ● Distributor: Jack of All Games
- Price: TBA ● Available: Now ● Rating: M
- Need: P166, 32MB RAM, 290MB HDD, 3D Video Card ● Want: PIII, 64MB RAM
- URL: [www.mightandmagic.com](http://www.mightandmagic.com)

PCPP

**FOR:** Great combat, interesting combos and it's a big, beautiful world.

**AGAINST:** Terrible acting, interface is somewhat confusing.

75



# C&C TIBERIAN SUN: FIRESTORM

C&C takes a step backwards. No, really!



In most cases, not a lot's expected from the expansion/mission pack. But considering that the typical one goes for a good fifty percent of the price of a full retail version of a game (ie, forty to fifty bucks), a mere handful of new units and minor tweaks - on top of the extra missions - simply won't do.

That said, Westwood have done an admirable job of presenting the new

multiplayer at a distinct disadvantage. GDI now have a long-range artillery weapon that packs a mighty punch, the "Juggernaut", however its defences are feeble and is easily disposed of by air units.

The missions themselves range from brilliant to downright monotonous, depending of course on the style of play you prefer. The first missions see the

## "THERE'S A SUPRISING TWIST TOWARDS THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN THAT'LL KNOCK YOU FOR SIX"

campaigns in Firestorm. The story is well considered and unfolds over the 18 missions through well-produced cutscenes. For fans of Tiberian Sun, there's a surprising twist towards the end of the campaign that'll knock you for six.

Westwood have also provided an update to their online service in the form of World Domination, a sort of persistent massively multiplayer game. Presented with a globe broken down into various territories, players join either side and partake in an ever-constant battle for ultimate supremacy. Fantastic, however the service continues to be plagued by horrendous lag times which disrupts play.

What doesn't help the proceedings are the new units. Again they tip the balance in favour of the Nod Brotherhood, rendering those GDI gamers in

player involved in all manner of unconventional escapades using only a handful of units, like pacifying a riot (deadly force here being the precursor to mission failure) or infiltrating an enemy base. Soon after, however, the missions degenerate into basic "build-up base and obliterate the enemy" style affairs. Ho-hum.

Some mission packs go above and beyond the call of duty - providing several and significant enhancements to the original experience. Age of Empires: Rise of Rome is one such example. Firestorm introduces the fantastic World Domination multiplayer game, though does precious little else to counter the problems of the original or expand upon Tiberian Sun.

March Stepnik





# MECHWARRIOR 3: PIRATE'S MOON EXPANSION PACK

No R&R for you! You come back one year!

Having thwarted the Smoke Jaguar invasion, it seemed like it was time for the Damocles Commandos to engage in a little clan-funded R&R. Alas, they've been rewarded with an immediate transfer to 'Veil'; a barely habitable mining planet frequented by pirates. Veil's hostile terrain and low ambient light levels make it a less-than-ideal theatre of operations. All is not lost however; with 6 new 'mech chassis at their disposal and countless new weapon types to experiment with, the Damocles Commandos will have

plenty to keep them amused. The bulk of the new 'mechs are Medium and Assault types, with the gargantuan Masakari and the imposing Atlas making a welcome appearance.

The game's new environments, comprised of arid plains and vertiginous chasms, are quite striking when viewed under the glare of 'mech headlights. Some of the new weapons are quite interesting (and devastatingly effective) and the ability to don an Elemental powersuit may excite some. On the whole, the new missions and multiplayer modes are very enjoyable. Disappointingly, the enemy and lancemate AI's have not been improved at all, detracting from the appeal of combat somewhat.

Overall, Pirates Moon is an expansion pack deemed worthy of the MechWarrior brand name, and fans of the original will certainly appreciate its subtle refinements.

Brett Robinson



# ROGUE SPEAR: URBAN OPS ADD-ON PACK

One of the best add-ons we've ever encountered improves an already great game.

The long awaited add-on for Rogue Spear has finally arrived, and it's exceeded all expectations. Urban Operations boasts five new single player locations set in various major cities including Venice, Hong Kong and London. Although five missions may not seem like much, they're extremely challenging and will take most players quite a while to complete successfully.

In addition to a plethora of well designed new multiplayer maps, there is now added support for game mods and an excellent Mission Builder utility. Classic multiplayer maps from Rainbow 6, and multitude of new game modes round out this very comprehensive package. The only real downside to the pack is the fact that most players won't see any reason to use a lot of the new weapons. With the exception of the AW Covert sniper rifle, the four new weapons are rather unimpressive. Fitted with an integrated silencer, the

AW allows competent players to rack up long range kills with impunity. But this weapon, alone, more than makes up for the shortcomings of its brothers.

Offering far more than most add-on packs, Urban Ops represents excellent value for money, particularly for those heavily into the game's multiplayer component. However, those used to the superior graphics and far more intuitive interface of Sierra's SWAT 3 may find it a little difficult to return to a game that now feels somewhat dated in comparison.

Brett Robinson





# SCORE LIST

THE PAST YEAR IN GAMING. THIS MONTH: **MOST MEMORABLE SPORTS GAMES**

GAME NAME SCORE ISSUE#



12 O'Clock High	68	#46
Abomination	81	#44
● Age of Empires 2	94	#42
Age of Wonders	84	#46
Airport Inc.	42	#48
Akuma: Demonspawn	50	#47
● Aliens vs. Predator	96	#37
Alpha Centauri: Alien X-fire	83	#45
Amerzone	68	#42
ANNO 1602	71	#40
Army Men 2	79	#38
Army Men In Space	66	#48
Asghan	43	#37
BG: Sword Coast	76	#41
Battle of Britain	62	#38
Battlezone 2	85	#48
Blackstone Chronicles	75	#37
Boss Rally	05	#39
Braveheart	86	#42
Breakneck	86	#39
● C&C Tiberian Sun	94	#41
Castrol Superbikes 2000	85	#42

Commandos: Call of Duty	83	#38
Constructor: Street Wars	74	#39
Corsairs	65	#40
● Cricket World Cup '99	93	#38
Croc 2	78	#48
Cutthroats	67	#43
Darkstone	68	#42
Delta Force 2	78	#46
● Descent 3	95	#38
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Dick Johnson V8 Challenge	45	#46
Disciples	81	#43
Discworld Noir	83	#39
Dracula	58	#47
Drakan	84	#43
Driver	71	#41
● Dungeon Keeper 2	90	#41
Eastern Front II	85	#39
Eidos Official F1	65	#39
● Everquest	90	#39
● Episode 1 Racer	90	#39
F22 Lightning 3	85	#40
● F/A 18 Hornet	91	#47
FA Prem. League Stars	71	#42

Grand Theft Auto 2	84	#44
GTA London	75	#38
Gruntz	45	#37
Guardians of Darkness	30	#41
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
● Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45



● Heavy Gear II	93	#40
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45
Hidden and Dangerous	88	#41
H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
● Homeworld	95	#41
I-War: Defiance	72	#44
Imperialism 2	72	#37
● Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
Indiana Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Interstate '82	60	#47
Invictus	51	#48
Jagged Alliance 2	89	#42
Jane's USAF	86	#44
Jimmy White's Cueball 2	67	#38
KA-52 Alligator	65	#48
Kingpin	86	#41
● Lander	95	#37
Lands of Lore 3	60	#38
Links 2000	79	#44
M25 Racer	25	#45

## Madden NFL 2000

Developer: EA Sports

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "Once you start understanding the game and begin a much more balanced campaign of running and passing, Madden becomes a nail-biting football simulation that'll have you just as enthralled as the real thing. And you will start yelling and screaming at the computer during the proceedings."

**84% IN PCPP#44**

● Machines	90	#38
Man of War II	15	#40
● Mechwarrior 3	91	#39
Messiah	89	#48
Midtown Madness	89	#40
● Mig Alley	92	#42
Might & Magic VII	70	#40

## Mike Stewart's Pro Bodyboarding

Developer: Gee Whiz! Entertainment

Publisher: PlayCorp

Distributor: PlayCorp

What we said then: "Bodyboarding is all about being outdoors, swimming and getting rigorous exercise while experiencing a particular physical sensation: riding the waves. All of these things are completely lost on translation to computer game, while the enjoyment you get from the game is predictably extremely limited."

**34% IN PCPP#40**

MS Flight Sim 2000	84	#44
NASCAR 3	89	#44
Nascar Revolution	35	#48
Nascar Road Racing	28	#41
Nascar Truck	80	#38
Nations: Fighter Command	82	#44
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46

## NBA Live 2000

Developer: EA Sports

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "In 1-on-1 mode, you can play with or against Jordan on an outdoor streetball court and try and take His Airness to the cleaners. To use an age-old basketball analogy, NBA Live 2000 is a two-handed, double-pump, grab-your-nuts, tomahawk dunk from the free-throw line."

**90% IN PCPP#45**

Need for Speed: High Stakes	89	#41
Nerf Arena	70	#46
NHL Championship 2000	78	#46
Nocturne	79	#46
North vs. South	67	#37
Nox	83	#48
● Omikron: Nomad Soul	93	#44
Operation Art of War 2	84	#42
Outcast	59	#40
Pandora's Box	68	#47
Panzer Elite	85	#46
● Planescape: Torment	91	#46
Pharaoh	88	#45
Phoenix	64	#46
Prince of Persia 3D	65	#43
Pro18 World Tour Golf	69	#38
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey	88	#47
Puma Street Soccer	75	#46
● Quake III: Arena	93	#45
● Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	92	#44
Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
Rayman 2	89	#45
Re-Volt	82	#41
Redline	83	#37



## Championship Manager 3

Developer: Sports Interactive

Publisher: Eidos

Distributor: Ozisoft

What we said then: "Far more complex match orders can now be issued, both on an individual and team basis. Without question, comprehensive is the only word to be applied to this statistical behemoth of a game...If you've exhausted the possibilities of CM2 and feel like more, then of course you need CM3."

**85% IN PCPP#38**

Civ: Test of Time	81	#41
Clans	48	#42
Codename: Eagle	64	#46

## FIFA 2000

Developer: EA Sports

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "Both professional and world-class modes offer experienced FIFA players a whole new challenge. Opposition teams now analyse human controlled attacking and defensive strategies and adjust accordingly to weed out defensive gaps as well as blocking offensive progression. To win a game at either of these levels is truly a tough ask, and immensely satisfying"

**88% IN PCPP#45**

Fighter Squadron	85	#37
Fighting Steel	80	#41
Final Fantasy VIII	77	#47
Fleet Command	89	#39
Flight Unlimited III	89	#43
Fly!	85	#42
● Force 21	90	#42
Ford Racing	72	#48
Fox Sports NBA 2000	56	#44
● Freespace 2	95	#44
Gabriel Knight III	87	#44
Gorky 17	65	#47
● GP 500	96	#43



● Requiem - Avenging Angel	90	#38
Resident Evil 2	88	#37
Revenant	82	#45
Rising Sun	82	#48
Rollcage	90	#38
R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45
Saga: Rage of the Vikings	42	#40
Sega Rally 2	68	#41
Septerra Core	84	#47
Seven Kingdoms 2	86	#44
Shadow Company	74	#44
Shadow Man	61	#41
Shane Warne Cricket	86	#37
● The Sims	90	#47
Sin - Wages of Sin	73	#38
Skydive!	12	#42
Slave Zero	55	#47
Soul Reaver: Legacy Of Kain	81	#43
South Park Rally	41	#47
Spec Ops 2	60	#46
Speed Demons	55	#47

## Sports Car GT

Developer: Image Space

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "In SCGT, expect to come around a corner and see dust and smoke up ahead because AI smashes are a common occurrence when the first few laps are under way, just like in real racing. Then they tend to dissipate as the race goes on."

## ● 90% IN PCPP#40

● Star Trek: BOTF	90	#39
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46
Star Trek: Starfleet Command	87	#43
● Starsiege	90	#37
SU-27 Flanker 2.0	83	#44

## Superbike 2000

Developer: EA Sports

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "All thirteen of the included circuits are very highly detailed and have been sculptured almost identically to the real thing. No longer do the circuits seem like ghost towns, as there are hundreds of spectators visible in both the stands and at various vantage points around the track."

## 89% IN PCPP#49



Madden NFL 2000



Tiger Woods USA Tour 2000

● SWAT 3	90	#46
● System Shock 2	98	#42
The Phantom Menace	76	#39
The Wheel of Time	84	#45
● Thief Gold	96	#45
Theme Park World	80	#45
Thrust, Twist & Turn	30	#39
● TOCA 2	91	#37
Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	84	#40



Sports Car GT

## Tiger Woods USA Tour 2000

Developer: EA Sports

Publisher: EA

Distributor: Ditto

What we said then: "The game looks and feels great, providing you have a system powerful enough to make the most of it. On a good system the graphics are truly stunning- Heron Bay is worth it just for the stroll, never mind the golf!"

## 84% IN PCPP#49

Tomb Raider: Last Revelation	89	#43
Traitor's Gate	78	#44
UEFA 98/99	71	#38
Ultima Online	68	#48
Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45

Unreal: Return to Na Pali	72	#41
● Unreal Tournament	94	#45
Urban Chaos	85	#46
Virtual Deep Sea Fishing	63	#38
Warbirds 2	81	#37
Warzone 2100	88	#38
World Manager	34	#48
● X-Wing Alliance	94	#37

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Superbike 2000



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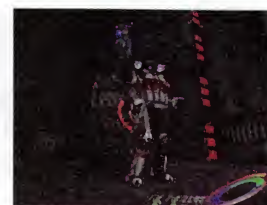
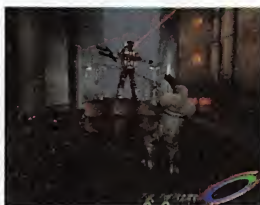
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## MESSIAH Playguide

MURRAY PHILBRICK DOES SOME SOUL-SEARCHING

### WEAPONS

There are two different weapon types in Messiah, Primary and Secondary. You can only have one primary weapon at any given time, so it's important to know which weapon or tool to use in a given situation. Secondary weapons are assigned to your host depending on their rank, and tend to be grenades or similar items.

#### Primary Weapons

**Feet/Fists** - Actually surprisingly effective, using your fists and feet will knock your opponent down. This can reduce the amount of damage you take in any given fight, though its usefulness in large

Bob the cherub is hardly the action hero we've come to expect from computer games. Essentially a baby with wings and a halo, God himself has given him the task of wading through all the violent scum in the city of Faktur to save the Earth... and Bob can't fight.

He can, however, possess people...

#### Possessions are everything

Bob can't fight to save himself. At best, he'll point his finger like a gun at someone and say "Bang!" Which, as you can imagine, is hardly the sort of threat to make heavily-armed cops baulk... particularly not when it comes from the aforementioned wing-

laden baby. So how do you fend off an entire corrupt city's worth of opponents, especially when you're so vulnerable to grievous bodily harm?

Normally, diving towards the space between someone's shoulder blades, face first is the sort of thing that would be accompanied by zany sound effects on Funniest Home Videos. Bob, however, is a special case; when he manages to leap into the back (or front, if playing the game on the easiest setting) of an unsuspecting (or even suspecting) opponent, he actually possesses whoever the unfortunate soul is and can control his or her actions. Possess a scientist and all of a sudden Bob can wander about a laboratory unmolested, or

possess a cop and use his rifle to plug his fellow officers!

While he is in possession of a body Bob is invulnerable, but his host body isn't. In fact you'll find that host bodies deteriorate very quickly, for the most part. A lot of firefights will tend to degenerate into frantic gunfire avoidance while trying to possess another host - a very tricky thing to manage indeed given Bob's own fragility. You'll find that moving around quickly and making ample use of cover will be your best friend when trapped in such a situation. Being in the open will almost always lead to your untimely demise.

#### Use your head

Often, though, a much

better option can simply be to avoid firefights altogether. When in possession of a host (as long as they have no weapon or attack stance ready), Bob will be able to wander about various areas without a care in the world. In fact, many of the puzzles in the game revolve around doing such things: getting Bob to possess a scientist, who can then move to gate 4's control panel and activate it, for example. This is not as easy as it sounds, though. If Bob is seen by someone as he depossesses his host, they'll raise the alarm and outright attack him. Also, some controls for gates and suchlike actually require a certain character type to be possessed for their activation; in some





## WEAPONS

firefights is essentially nil. Still, against one or two opponents, this can be your most effective choice at times.

**Welding Torch** - Almost useless in offence, the welding torch is basically a tool for repairing broken objects. You'll actually be better off using your fists as a weapon than this, if things become that desperate.

**Bone Saw** - Primarily a tool rather than a weapon, this is almost (but not quite) as bad as the welding torch as a weapon. Again, it's probably better to resort to using your fists if push comes to shove.

**Pump Gun** - Excellent as a close-quarters shotgun, but quite awful as a sniping weapon, that's the pump gun. It is, however, excellent at detonating crates and other such objects.

**Machine Gun** - A great weapon for both close-in and ranged work, the machine gun offers deadly bursts of effective gunfire. It also makes for quite an effective sniping weapon, able to kill many opponents in a single shot.

**Maimer** - Able to spit massive amounts of metal shards at opponents, the Maimer is an excellent weapon to cut down large groups of opponents in short order.

**The Pak** - The Pak is a weapon with two main abilities. Firstly, its fire will freeze and slow an opponent. The more hits an opponent takes, the slower they become. Secondly, it allows the wielder some ability to fly or glide to the ground safely, much as Bob's wings do. The Chots

cases, you'll have only one chance to get the possession right. If you possess the only scientist in the area and get spotted by a nearby cop, you're stuck.

While it's quite true that Messiah is quite open-ended in how you solve most of its problems, whether through wandering around quietly in a possessed host or shooting your way through its problems, you'll probably find that in most cases erring on the side of caution is wise. Need to possess a cop, but they all seem to be watching each other's backs? Stand by and watch them in a scientist's body until it becomes apparent there's an opening. Odds are one will show up with a bit of patience...

### On a wing and a prayer

Bob's other main ability is that of gliding, as well as a limited ability to fly. While it's true that his wings aren't quite up to

the standard of a true angel's, they can still save his neck quite well. If he's taking a long fall to the ground, simply holding the jump button lets him glide smoothly downwards so as not to do himself any harm. They can also be used to launch him into the air somewhat: tapping the jump key repeatedly makes his wings flap. This can be used to reach ledges that seem just that little too high for him at first.

### The gentle art of making enemies.

As mentioned before, it can be a good idea to simply wander about as if you belong while in a host body. This is much less likely to gain hostile reactions from those who would normally assume your host body is friendly. In other words, wandering by in Frank the cop's body seems natural to Joe the cop. Wandering towards him with your gun drawn and a crazy look in your eye, however, is likely to

get him feeling a little edgy, so remember to move out of combat mode whenever a fight is over (hit the "action" key to switch out of it).

Another excellent ability is that of sniping. A lot of the fights you encounter in your journeys will leave you heavily outnumbered, so don't be afraid to even the odds with a bit of well-placed sniping from a distance. In fact, in a lot of cases it can actually be an almost crucial skill to practice if you want to make it from A to B in one piece.

Bear in mind that in some cases, enemy reinforcements will simply continue to arrive on the scene for as long as you're willing to stay put and take it. If the odds seem \*too\* overwhelming, then run! Chances are they really are!

### Climb every mountain

If you find yourself in a situation in which you simply can't find a way

around it, chances are you've hit one of two snags: either a host body you needed to continue has been killed, or you simply haven't looked around closely enough at your environment.

No matter who you've currently possessed (or even if you haven't possessed anyone at all) you are still able to enter sniper mode. If you've just climbed up to the highest platform you can see and there doesn't seem to be anywhere further to go, simply look around; chances are you missed a tiny ledge or outcropping above or below your normal field of view that's actually within reach.

### Depossession of hostiles

At some point you'll want to depossess someone without having them shoot at you immediately afterwards. One way to do this is to simply run or jump off a long drop and then quickly depossess the host. Bob



## WEAPONS

make effective use of this weapon more often than not.

**Flamethrower** - Quite difficult to use but unfailingly deadly, the flamethrower will kill most opponents with a single shot. It has two main drawbacks, however: it's a single-use weapon, and firing it at a target too close to you can set you alight, also. Though it excels when used against large groups, be careful when firing.

**Bazooka** - Definitely not a close-quarter weapon, the bazooka's splash damage nonetheless makes it excellent to use against groups. One or two rockets into the midst of a group of enemies will leave most decimated!

**Maser** - Useless against ordinary folk, the maser's sole usefulness is against the hulking armoured Behemoths you'll meet towards the end of the game. It is by far the weapon of choice against them, though very limited overall.

**Rocket-Propelled Harpoon** - One of the most - if not \*the\* most - effective weapons in the game, the rocket-propelled harpoon is excellent at both short and long ranges due to its ability to pierce (and pin) opponents dead to a wall. It is also amazingly accurate. Though be warned that it is also quite easily dodged when fired from a distance.

**Gun Turrets** - Only useable by commanders, these guns are nonetheless highly effective damage-dishers. Not only can they decimate your opponents' ranks, but they can often also be used to shoot down any barriers blocking your path.



### TIPS

If you can manage to position yourself correctly, possession of a new host can be made easy by simply standing back to back with your intended new host and depossessing. Bob should instantly jump into the new host, with neither of them the wiser.

backflips out of his host's back, so if you time it right it's possible to glide or land on the platform behind you while your hosts plummets to his or her doom. Another way is to simply stand close to a wall and fire the bazooka into it until your host dikes from the explosions. Either way, the effect is the same, though neither is too pleasant a way to go, by any means.

### Hosts

There are a large number of folks you will come across in Messiah, all of whom can be possessed. The most common belong to several distinct groups.

#### Military

The military will fire on Bob in his cherub

form on sight, though often their conflict with the Chots will distract them long enough for you to slip by unnoticed.

**Light Cops** - The first body you possess when entering the game, the light cop is



also the most common host body you'll find amongst the military personnel. None too effective in combat, their numbers alone can make up for such shortcomings.

**Medium Cops** - Armed with standard grenades and most commonly seen with a machine gun, the medium cop can take a few more hits than the light cop thanks to their improved armour.



**Heavy Cops** - Few and far between but incredibly hardy, heavy cops are most often useful for gaining access to otherwise forbidden areas - not to mention dishing out obscene



amounts of damage when necessary.

**Riot Cops** - Equipped with concussion grenades and a riot shield, riot cops are deployed to deal with large enemy actions and, as their name obviously implies, riots. The shield can be incredibly effective at blocking incoming fire - handy to have, but not fun to be up against.



**Commanders** - Tough nuts to crack, commanders are also the military personnel necessary to access the most secure areas in Faktur. They are also the only hosts able to activate and make use of gun turrets.

#### Beasts

Man-made creatures of incredible power, they can be tricky to possess based on their sheer size alone. Nonetheless, if you can manage it (and, in fact, you have to at some points of the game)



you will find their sheer strength more than makes up for the difficulty.

#### Armoured Beasts



The only creatures more powerful than the beasts, the armoured variety of these creatures is nigh on unstoppable. Arm-mounted machine guns and powerful grenades make them the host of choice if you can manage it.

#### The Underground

Mutants abound beneath the streets of Faktur. While they are certainly not pleasant creatures, they can nonetheless prove invaluable to Bob on his travels.

### TIPS

When you miss a jump, it's possible to gain a little extra height by simply bumping into a wall in flight. Bob will reel backwards and slightly upwards in his recovery, which can be just enough to reach an otherwise unreachable area.





**Rats** - Thanks to their small size and great speed, rats can be invaluable for sneaking through small spaces such as ventilation ducts without taking a single shot. Not the most pleasant of hosts, but necessary at times, nonetheless.

**Chots** - Humans turned mutant due to the conditions below Faktur's streets, Chots are the standard warriors of the Chot rebellion. They are most frequently armed with paks.



**Chot Behemoths** - The Chot equivalent of the human beasts, these hulking brutes can charge through even large groups of opponents with little difficulty.

## TIPS

When in combat, if you see a small white skull in the centre of the targeting reticle on your opponent it means the shot will kill him.

## Civilians

The mainstay workers of Faktur, civilians are frequently allowed into places not even the military can set foot, and as such are often valuable hosts.

**Workers** - The repairmen of Faktur, workers are often given clearance to high-security areas based on that ability alone. They also excel at fixing broken objects that are necessary for your further travels.

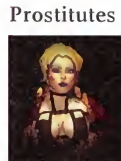


**Radiation Workers (Nuke Techs)** - Similar to regular workers, radiation workers have one important distinction: their ability to enter potentially hazardous environments that other hosts would simply die in. As such, they can be the host of choice in a variety of circumstances where protection from the area's environment is needed.

**Scientists** - Weak in combat, scientists are

nonetheless imperative to navigating Faktur. They have the highest clearance of all the basic workers, and moreover, they have access to some places no other host can enter.

**Dwellers** - Basic citizens of the sleaze district, they are nonetheless good hosts for two reasons; their occasional armament and their ability to walk the streets untroubled by the military. A good choice for when you simply need to get from A to B.



**Prostitutes** - Like dwellers, prostitutes serve as excellent hosts for Bob to wander about in without bother. They are also able to pass on Bob's possession with a not-so-surreptitious kiss.

**Dancers/ Waitresses** - Both of these types of civilians play an important role in your finding your way into Faktur's military base.

**Pimp Daddy** - Basically useful for the items kept in his penthouse, Pimp Daddy is a star amongst the population of Faktur.



**Minions of Satan** - While Satan's patiently waiting for the final showdown on his moon base, his little evil cherubs are busy getting in Bob's way. They can do everything our pal can, including possess hosts with which to attack him. Be prepared to show them why the real deal is better...



# WEAPONS

## Secondary Weapons

**Grenade** - Cops of medium rank are issued with these standard grenades, which detonate on contact with an opponent and deal a fair amount of damage to all within range.

**Concussion Grenade** - Riot cops are issued with concussion grenades, which will stun anyone within their detonation range.

**Stick 'Um Grenade** - Heavy cops are issued with these grenades. Activated once, they will stick to whatever target they hit until activated again, at which time they will explode. Excellent to use against unsuspecting patrolmen about to wander over to their buddies.

**Distortion Grenade** - Commanders and dominas use these grenades, which are essentially a more effective version of concussion grenades. When thrown, they cause all in their path to distort, knocking any caught in the blast to the ground, stunned.

**Jumping Betty** - Trenchcoat-wearing Chots are issued with these proximity mines. When set, they will wait for someone to pass nearby before activating, at which point they spin around spraying shrapnel into the nearby area.

**Offensive Bot** - An automated drone that will attack anyone attacking its activator, the offensive bot can provide some effective extra firepower. Simply walk near it to activate it. It will then hover above your shoulder until you activate it.

## TIPS

If you're in a rush to get through a door, look to the lights around its edges. A door with red lights surrounding it is locked, while one surrounded by green lights is unlocked.



# Quake 3 Arena

## WEB RESOURCES

**ELIH BRADING CALLS THE LONGEST YARD HOME**



### QUAKE III ARENA

<http://www.quake3arena.com/>

■ The official site of Quake III Arena - designed, run and maintained by the talented development team that is id. The first and foremost point of contact between the community and the company,

quake3arena.com is almost always the first to feature any official product updates and patch releases.

### PLANETQUAKE

<http://www.planetquake.com/>

■ Planetquake is the orb of the arena world and an eye to all the elements of 3D gaming. Established in conjunction with the release of classic Quake, PQ hosts a swab of sites that are at the zenith of creative-content. If you can't find something of interest here, check to make sure that you didn't accidentally enter planetdaikatana.com into your address bar.



### GAMEART

<http://www.gameart.com/>

■ Showcasing some of the best user-created game-related art from across the globe, Gameart is the gamers gallery of electronic entertainment. With a primary focus of Quake-based digital and hand-drawn artwork, gameart.com is the place to visit and view a virtual gallery of personal interpretations.

### FILEPLANET

<http://www.fileplanet.com/>

■ A warehouse of gib-related goodness, Fileplanet is home to the most extensive library of Quake-related entities. From personal configurations to modifications to Quake Desktop Themes - if it's distantly related to your favourite first-person shooter, Fileplanet will have it in stock.

### SLUGGOS MOD CENTRAL

<http://www.planetquake.com/m>

### QUAKE3 RADIO

<http://www.planetquake.com/q3radio/>

■ Making up for the lack of realtime voice communication that was promised for the boxed copy of Quake III Arena, Q3 Radio incorporates an archive of over 30 pre-recorded voice messages. The commands are extremely useful especially for teamplay and CTF games. By binding a key to the selected WAV file, players can communicate with both their own team members, and taunt that of their opposition.

odcentral/

■ With the release of the multiplayer oriented title, Sluggo has swayed

Quake III way - and why wouldn't we feature a site that is not only rich in reviewed content but also one that is updated religiously? If you're looking to change your copy of Quake III in almost any way imaginable, it's here that you'll find the cream of the crop.

### Q3 GUIDE

<http://www.planetquake.com/quake3/q3guide/>

■ So you're a newbie. So what, we're all newbies



really. It is an entirely new product, so why not do some reading up on it? From circle strafing to polishing your plasma shots, the PlanetQuake guide is an imperative read for anyone wanting to get in the game.

### RIDING THE ROCKET

[www.planetquake.com/rtr/](http://www.planetquake.com/rtr/)

■ With a focus on content rather than candy, RtR is a website devoted entirely to the niche market of trick







jumping. Being a heavily followed Quake2-based site, the page is beginning the transition to the curved world of Quake III Arena. Not only are there tutorials and demos of advanced in-game movements, there are also bot challenges where players compete to gain the highest score in the shortest possible timeframe.

### QUAKE: THE MOVIE

<http://www.planetquake.com/tritin-films/qtm/qtm.htm>  
■ Solving, or, more appropriately, finding a

workaround to the lack of demo editing in Quake III, Tritin Films have seen fit to create a movie rendered entirely in the advanced animation tool 3D Studio MAX. With a storyline that encompasses both the old and the new characters of id games, the film is sure to engage fans of Keygrip and Quake.

### FORCE CLAN HOMEPAGE

<http://www.planetquake.com/forceclan/>  
■ The Force Clan is perhaps one of the most outspoken communities of

gamers on the net. Not only their personal homepage, but also a site of extremely humorous content, Force Clan live their days making sure that people remember "it's just a game."

### THE SMOKING GUN

<http://www.planetquake.com/smokinggun/>

■ If you've ever read a high school paper you'll instantly conform to the style Smoking Gun introduces. While very much tongue-in-cheek, every month the Gun discusses the finer points of oppression that have been stirring the gaming community - often times picking on the same group of developers or industry professionals month after month.

### DEAR MYNX

<http://www.planetquake.com/features/mynx/>

■ There are some sites that deviate substantially from the norm. Dear Mynx is a page where Quake players can discuss their most personal issues - and we aren't just talking about the intimacy of their configuration file. Mynx delves heavily into the dirty, dirty topics - from taming a wookie to sucking a slug - all while relating it back to the sexual elation that is spawned from just a few minutes of Quake.

### THE QUAKE WOMENS FORUM

<http://www.planetquake.com/qwf/>

■ You'd be surprised how many female gamers there are out there and why shouldn't they get their own page? Touching on important feminine issues including Barbie's skanky clothing range, the Quake Women's Forum was created and is updated by important female figures in the world of online gaming.



# THE 4TH COMING

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# The Oracle

**HEADLINES:** Nox Playguide • Battlezone 2 Playguide • Age of Empires II Web Resources • The Sims Web Resources • And of course the Great Bearded One

## CODE

### Battlezone 2

To access the cheats, hold [CTRL] and [-] to bring down the console, then type:  
**bzbody** - Unlimited Shields  
**bzfree** - Unlimited Pilots and Resources  
**bzradar** - Full Map  
**bznt** - Unlimited Ammo  
**bzview** - Comsat Link without having to Power or Build

### Half-Life: Opposing Force

Start Half-Life using "hl.exe -dev -console -game gearbox". Do this by modifying the Windows shortcut properties for Opposing Force and adding "-dev -console -game gearbox" to the end of the command line. Once in the console, enter the following codes:  
**IMPULSE 101** - Give all weapons and ammo.  
**/GOD** - god mode.  
**/NOCLIP** - walk through walls/fly.  
**/MAP xxxx** - go to map xxxx.  
**/GIVE xxxx** - give item xxxx.

### Le Mans 24 Hours

All the following cheats should be entered as the Drivers Name. Done correctly, the screen will flash repeatedly and appear to have shattered. Some of these cheats will automatically take you to certain pre-race screens so don't worry.  
**ALLTHECARSNOW** - All Cars in Arcade Mode  
**ALLTRACKSPLEASE** - All Tracks in Arcade Mode

The Oracle is a Wisdom Dispensing Service. He cannot abide cheaters. Write to him at:  
**Oracle**  
**PC PowerPlay**  
**Level 6 418a Elizabeth St.**  
**Surry Hills, NSW 2010**  
**oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com**

## Homeworld

**Q>** I'm up to the 4th battle in

Homeworld where the object is to destroy the fleet that destroyed Kharak. The best I've managed is to jump in with 3 ion frigates and 5 assault frigates. However I'm still finding the opposition overwhelming - they seem to have dozens of assault and ion frigates. My fleet gets annihilated. My questions are: How do I get through this? What is the best fleet configuration to start with? Is the size of the opposing force linked to the time it takes to get through the preceding battles? Help me, Obiwan.

**Jim Tulip, Bathurst NSW**

**A>** Firstly you'll need at least ten fighters, eight corvettes, and four salvage corvettes. You'll also really want a resource controller. Make sure you have repair corvettes near your mothership as ion cannons will pound her. The best way to nab these ion cannon arrays is to send assault frigates or corvettes to attack first, then follow with salvage corvettes. If you send in the salvage corvettes first, the ion cannon arrays will attack and destroy them, completely blowing your chances of swiping some of these useful ships. After this the enemy will



come hard at your mothership. Pressure the enemy arrays with fighters, then circle your salvage corvettes behind them to capture them both. Meanwhile, use the arrays you captured, along with anything else you have available, to drive away the carrier. Once it is sufficiently damaged, it will hyperspace-jump away.

## Messiah

**Q>** I am stuck in the game Messiah and would appreciate some

assistance. I am currently in the dance club and am stuck on the dance competition. I am unable to complete it as, although my computer meets the requirements, the game slows down to a crawl which makes it impossible to pass this section. I was wondering if there was an easier way to get past this bit or a way to skip it all together.

**CSM, Email**

**A>** Normally, just watch the arrows on the pedestal. Just press the right arrow on your

keyboard when the corresponding arrow flashes on the pedestal. The sequence gets faster and faster, but once it's over, you'll be granted access to the VIP room. If the game just slows down, go in to your options, monkey around with the specs, mainly your resolutions and then see how it goes after that. If it still does not work, you may have to do a reinstall.

## The Sims

**Q>** I'm playing The Sims and I am having problems making friends in the game so could you please help me out?

**Sera Walling**

**A>** Well, much like in real life, friends in some ways are a bit of a waste of time. You don't actually need them so long as your family is talking to you. But if you want to, then make sure you greet everyone as they come to visit you. Talk to people on





the phone. Keep your hygiene levels high and ensure that you are not initiating sexual contact with people before your friendship is high enough. Wait until it's 40 or more before you do or you'll upset the delicate little sims.

## LAPD Future Cop

**Q>** Are there any cheats for L.A.P.D Future Cop??? I wanna know!!! I need cheats goddammit!!!!!! GIMME CHEEEAAATSSSSSS!!!!!! NOW! Email me back with the cheats.

**Esteban (aka Solja Boy\*187)**

**A>** Hahahhaahah!!!! Truly, you are a fool, Solja Boy Esteban. I do not give cheats, I do not enter into correspondence with you little trouser wearing viruses and I most certainly do not do these things for people who don't even say please.

## Prince of Persia 3D

**Q>** Tell me how to get past the torture chamber thing in Prince of Persia 3D in the prison. I need to do this or I'll die.

**Chris Walken**

**A>** Mr Walken, it's an honour. If I wasn't so impressed by your nom de plume I'd ignore your

rude phrasing all together. Move toward the head-crushing device and put the box on it. Then go and flip the nearby lever to activate the device and smash the box revealing a bracelet. Go get the bracelet then exit this room by crawling back through the blade trap passage and return to the room with Assan's head. Stand in front of the sculpture and activate it to open the gate. Follow the passage beyond and fight another guard in the next room. When he is dead you can enter the door to the blue area. And that's it. Pretty easy when you think about it, nein?

## Ultima IX: Ascension

**Q>** Please help me find the Mantra for the Shrine of Sacrifice. I know it's on Minoc but I just can't seem to find who I need to talk to.

**Sarah J, Email**

**A>** You'll need to go behind the waterfall and recover Dayla's Dolly. Take it back to Dayla. Then go back to the gypsies where there is a wagon on a hill - the home of Morganna, the old wise woman. She'll tell you the mantra, CAH, and other info. Now look into her crystal ball to see where the entrance to Covetous is!



## Ultima IX: Ascension

**Q>** I need somebody to sponsor me to go on a quest for the gauntlet, but can't figure out where to go. Please give me your smarts.

**Gino Q, Email**

**A>** Immediately after you've finished the conversation with the quartermaster, Gearhart approaches from the machinery room. Speak with him, and he'll offer to sign your sponsorship petition in exchange for a favour. Select yes when prompted. He asks that you kill an urchin causing trouble near the apple orchard. If you kill the urchin, Gearhart will sign your petition. He hands over the ruby key that provides access through the gate into the orchard. Was it really worth it though,

you murderous bastards? Killing children?!

Walk west of the fortress and enter through the orchard gate. Explore the orchard and kill the bats chasing the poor female workers. Collect the stray apples on the ground. The northwest area of the orchard contains a shed with the urchin, beast scroll, some gold, and a pair of leather armbands. When you're ready, enter the caves to the northeast of the shed (due north inside the orchard) and prepare for battle against the annoying urchin.

## Betrayal at Krondor

**Q>** I'm playing Betrayal at Krondor, and I am having some problems with the final caverns. I can't seem to find the Oracle of Aal and I can't find the second level. I'm having a massive mental block about this. Please help.

**Booya, Email**

**A>** This is pathetically easy and I don't even know why I am answering it, but The Oracle of Aal can be found by going through the North door of the first room you come to. The Oracle of Aal is located in the NE area of the caverns. Open your eyes and have a look around. The second level entrance is on the NE side of the caverns. Head through the East door, but watch out as there are quite a few dead ends scattered around there.

**LEMANSOFFERS** - Pick From Any GT1, GT2, etc in LM  
**MAKEITPEASY** - Race Over 1 Lap in LM, Others Cars Handicapped  
**MAKEITNORMAL** - Resets **MAKEITPEASY** Cheat  
**TOYOTA1999** - Race for Toyota Team  
**1999AUDI** - Secret Audi Prototype  
**19BMW99** - Secret BMW Prototype  
**DEBORALM** - Secret Debora Racing Team  
**DEBORACING** - Race for Debora Racing Team in LM  
**1999CHEATCARS** - All Secret Prototype GT1 and GT2 Cars

## Rollcage Stage 2

Go to the 'Bonus Awards' menu and enter one of the following cheat-codes. A noise will sound when you've entered it correctly.  
**metropolis** - All Cars  
**mynameisneo** - All Campaigns  
**mynameismrsmith** - All Campaigns Minus 1  
**inversion** - Mirror Mode  
**wreckedonspeed** - All Game-Types (excluding Soccer)  
**warpsspeedmrsulu** - All Tracks

## Soldier of Fortune

You need to enter these cheats at the console. To get the console, right-click on sof.exe in your demo directory and choose "Create shortcut" and then right-click on the shortcut you've created and choose "Properties". Change the command line to add this: "+set console 1" It should look something like this when finished:  
 "c:\...\SOF\sof.exe" +set console 1" Now, once in the game, bring up the console by pressing "~":  
**heretic** - God Mode  
**phantom** - Walk Through Walls  
**ninja** - Enemies Don't See You  
**elbow** - Give Weapons 1-5





# HARDWARE HAPPENINGS

## TECHNEWS

SILICON STATE OF THE ART WITH **HUGH NORTON-SMITH**

## CELERON 2

### BASTARDISED PENTIUM III?

In a bid to remain at the top of the highly competitive budget CPU market, Intel has released the latest incarnation of its Celeron processor. It is being released at speeds of 566 and 600MHz.

The original Celeron was a huge success among hardware enthusiasts; it was cheap and, above all, easily overclocked. The infamous Celeron 300A, for example, could easily make it up to 450MHz by simply shifting the FSB frequency

from 66MHz to 100MHz. At 450MHz, the 300A offered gaming performance virtually equivalent to that of the Pentium II 450 - for most of us, it was the ideal gaming solution.

Now for the first time since the 300A, the Celeron is receiving a brand new core, internally referred to as Coppermine128. Just like the original Celeron was a derivative of the Pentium II architecture, the new Celeron is a derivative of the present day Pentium III processor. If you recall, the Pentium III's core is called the Coppermine, and what primarily delineates the Coppermine from the standard Pentium III is its 256KB Advanced Transfer Cache. The new Celeron's core features the same benefits of the Pentium III, such as its SSE instructions and an Advanced Transfer Cache, but it drops the L2 cache size down to 128KB from the 256KB found in the Pentium III's Coppermine core. Unsurprisingly, this has rather a large impact upon game performance.

Although we had expected the new Celeron to be a freakish overclocker, this sadly wasn't the case. The 600MHz samples which we extensively tested feature a whopping 9.0x clock multiplier, with a puny 66MHz front side bus. Thus, they would be able to hit an impressive 900MHz when used with a 100MHz FSB setting. Although an overclock of these proportions might be possible

as yields get better, our samples weren't able to do it. A Celeron at 900/100MHz would be just about as fast as a Pentium III at 900MHz in most situations, in spite of the neutered L2 cache.

Hardcore gamers may want to avoid the new Celeron: it's been crippled through the reliance on the 66MHz FSB/memory bus and the measly 128KB internal cache. However, for users of 66MHz LX motherboards, the Celeron 2 will make a compelling upgrade. Provided that your BIOS has support for the Celeron, the CPU does a good job at offering entry level performance at a low price.

### CPU SUPPLY PROBLEMS

Both Intel and arch-rival AMD are having enormous difficulties meeting consumer demand for their microprocessors. This is particularly worrying, as the second quarter is generally regarded as a slow sales period. Generally, demand picks up in the third and fourth quarters, fuelled by Christmas and the introduction of new computer models.

Although Intel has had problems satisfying demand for some time, its problems have become especially acute in the past month. The Transistor Titan's tribulations are ascribed to lower than expected yields in their high-end chips, compounded by unusually large public demand. This has been enormously beneficial to AMD, who has been able to capitalise on Intel's inability to produce sufficient quantities of microprocessors.

AMD has already announced that it has completely sold out of Athlon and K6-2+ processors for the second quarter, which ends in late June. The shortage has been attributed to both manufacturing constraints at Intel and unexpected public enthusiasm for the Athlon. So far, AMD has had a wildly successful year, with sales increasing by a strong 73%.

### AMD THUNDERBIRD

Thunderbird is the internal codename for the next incarnation of the AMD Athlon microprocessor. Having established a successful brand name, AMD is likely to dub the Thunderbird the Athlon II. Launched at speeds topping 1GHz, and using a 266MHz internal FSB, the Thunderbird will become the choice of power-users everywhere. Like the Intel Pentium III, the



## QUICKBYTES

### OPENML API ANNOUNCED

A new video and graphics programming interface (API) allowing developers to port their product across multiple platforms has been announced by a consortium of ten companies, including 3dfx, ATI, S3, Silicon Graphics and Intel. While similar to the OpenGL graphics standard, OpenML will also add ways to integrate audio and video streams, including:

- Simple queue-based models for simultaneously manipulating multiple audio and video streams
- Video and graphics primitive extensions to support integration of video and graphics content
- Easy 2D/3D and video compositing
- Support for precise audio, video, and

graphics stream synchronisation.

- High-quality OpenGL rendering extensions

OpenML will work on Win32, Macintosh and Unix-based systems. Notably absent from the list of developers is Microsoft, whose competing DirectX programming interface operates exclusively under Windows!





## QUICKBYTES

### DRIVER INSANITY!

With every videocard out in the market, one element can make or break a card: drivers. Drivers generally come in two flavours: official and beta. Official drivers offer full technical support, and are tested to work with most software. On the other hand, beta drivers may include snazzy new features and increased performance, at the expense of documentation and reliability. Beta drivers are easily found, but should only be used if you're not concerned about overall system stability. Check out [www.reactorcritical.com](http://www.reactorcritical.com) for the latest beta drivers to have surfaced on the 'net.

Thunderbird will migrate to a full-speed 256k internal L2 cache. The Athlon core is enormously cache-dependent, so the Thunderbird should have unbeatable performance.

### AMD SPITFIRE

To compete with Intel's newest revision of the Celeron, AMD is expected to release the Spitfire, aka the Athlon Select. The Spitfire is planned to replace the crusty K6-2+ as AMD's budget PC offering. However, performance is expected to be anything but low-end. Leaked benchmarks suggest that the Spitfire might be faster than the classic Athlon in almost all tests. Essentially, the Spitfire is

If you're using a GeForce256 card, you might want to try the Nvidia 5.14 drivers that were recently 'leaked' onto the Internet. These new drivers provide a mind-blowing 25% speed increase in certain situations, and include the option to turn-on fullscreen anti-aliasing (FSAA). If you recall, FSAA eliminates the jagged edges that you can notice in many games. While FSAA looks stunning it is unrealistically demanding on hardware to be of any practical use. Hopefully the Geforce 2 GTS and the 3dfx Voodoo 5 5500 will rectify this with integrated FSAA support in hardware!

an emasculated Thunderbird processor using a socketed form factor. Like the Thunderbird, the Spitfire is based around a .18-micron version of the classic Athlon processing core. However, AMD have included only 128k of full-speed onboard Level 2 cache, in contrast to the Thunderbirds whopping 256k.

With the new Celeron's weakened by the 66mhz FSB, the Spitfire could easily take the performance crown in the budget-PC segment of the market. Things look set to become interesting.

### WINDOWSME EXPLORED

Due for release in August/September,

## HOTLINKS

[www.tweak3d.net](http://www.tweak3d.net)

The most comprehensive 'tweak-guides' on the internet. Maximise the potential of your rig.

[www.amdzone.com](http://www.amdzone.com)

In-Depth AMD-specific newssystem. Only 60mb.

[www.hardOCP.com](http://www.hardOCP.com)

The site for overclocking junkies

[www.overclockers.com.au](http://www.overclockers.com.au)

Australian overclocking forum. Updated regularly.

WindowsME is Microsoft's latest unscrupulous attempt to repackage Windows 95 as an original consumer operating system. Unlike Windows 2000, which utilises the advanced NT codebase, WindowsME will rely on the pseudo 32-bit code of Windows 95. Also, like Windows 95 and 98, clunky-old DOS is still lurking in the background behind the polished veneer. While the corporate sector and high-end users are expected to use the fully 32-bit Windows 2000, WindowsME is aimed squarely at the home user. Distressingly, Microsoft is pushing WindowsME as the ultimate gaming platform. Features include integrated DirectX 7 support and full compliance with the EasyPC standard. Naturally, the ubiquitous Windows interface has had a few minor tweaks.

In case you're wondering, WindowsME is not merely a shit name, but an abbreviation of Windows Millennium Edition. It's not a new dawn though, just more of the same. Avoid. ■



# THE BEAST

## AN ULTIMATE RIG BY HUGH NORTON-SMITH

### CPU: Dual Pentium III 933 EB SMP

The 1GHz Pentium III processors are almost impossible to find. They are also insanely expensive (even for the God box), and require elaborate cooling to remain stable. The Pentium III 933 offers similar performance, at a much more reasonable price. With two of these babies, you'll thrash any single processor system in Quake3. When the Athlon goes dual, we'll give it consideration!

### Motherboard: SuperMicro P6DBE

One of the few motherboards that supports dual Pentium III 'Coppermine' processors, and up to 1GB of RAM! Designed as a server motherboard, the SuperMicro P6DBE is renowned for its stability.

### RAM: 256 MB KingMaxx TinyBGA PC133 SDRAM

256MB should keep your computer satisfied for some time. You'll also be able to do some serious multitasking! The PC133 standard is critical for a system that is based on a 133MHz Front Side Bus.

### Hard Drive: Quantum Fireball 28GB CM

Unlike the KX, the Quantum CM has an impressive 2 MB cache. It also features the ATA/66 interface, and a spindle speed of 7,200RPM.

### Videocard: Asus V6800 Deluxe

Although it only (!) has 32MB of DDR texture memory, the V6800 Deluxe has the most complete feature set of any videocard. This includes TV-In/Out, as well as 3D glasses and a DVD software decoder.

### Soundcard: Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live! Platinum

The SB Live! Platinum package includes the highly successful SB Live! Card, as well as the Live Drive II optical interface and a massive software package.

### Monitor: Sony G500 21" Trinitron

Able to pull off 2048x1536, this'll impress the mates. Particularly when coupled with a capable videocard like the Asus V6800.

The Beast represents what the PC PowerPlay crew recommends you buy if money were no obstacle. In short, the most nitro-burning, hard-rocking computer system this side of a Silicon Graphics Onyx2 RealityMonster. (Yes, it does exist!)



## 3 D E N G I N E S E X P O S E D :



# THE POWER BEHIND 3D GAMES

BY HUGH NORTON-SMITH

## THE ENGINE ROOM

Creating a game from scratch can be a costly and drawn-out affair. Development can take up to five years, and budgets can blowout to Hollywood-esque proportions. Perhaps the hardest and most time-consuming part of building a finished game is the construction of an initial code-base or game engine. One way to minimise the length of the development cycle is to license technology from other game developers. Id Software, for instance, makes much of its profits from selling 'recycled' game technology to other developers.

In computer programming, engine is jargon for a program that performs a core or essential function for other programs. It acts as a focal hub, which co-ordinates the overall operation of a number of sub-programs. Traditionally, a game engine includes rendering technology (graphics) and some level of networking code. As it is usually game-specific, the sound, physics and AI implementation are generally left up to the licensees.

There are several advantages to licensing technology, besides the shortened development time. Most importantly, you buy proven technology, guaranteed to work over a wide range of hardware platforms. A well-known 3D engine can also act as a sort of 'status symbol' - even before much was known about Unreal Tournament, it was hugely anticipated due to its use of a souped-up Unreal engine.

Although id software is considered the forefather of 3D technology and lucrative licensing arrangements, it's becoming an increasingly competitive arena. Relative newcomers such as Monolith and Epic are rapidly making inroads into a world previously dominated by id, with products that offer a similar level of technology at a much more reasonable price. With id Software's next game well under way, and Epic's Tim Sweeney committed to the enigmatically named Ascension engine, it's an exciting time for gamers.







## QUAKE

This is where it all began. Dating back to mid 1996, Quake was the first fully polygonal realtime shooter. Quake was the first major game to support the OpenGL graphics library. It was VQuake that finally convinced me to invest in a then outrageously expensive Rendition Verite graphics card. I'm sure many of you can tell a similar story.

Quake is a comparatively primitive engine, and looking at it today, it certainly shows. Although it's a flexible and completely open source engine, it does lack a lot of important features. Primarily, it uses primitive frame-by-frame animation, rather than skeletal animation. The polygon limitations imposed by the engine are depressingly low: models look chunky, and levels must be composed of comparatively few 'brushes'. However, having been made open source, the game has gone through a series of major renovations. Rudimentary 32-bit colour has been implemented, as well as volumetric fogging, decal support and coloured lighting.

The legacy of the Quake engine can be seen in games such as Hexen 2, Heretic 2 and Daikatana.

## QUAKE II

Another brainchild of John Carmack and the



team at id Software, the Quake II engine is little more than an incremental upgrade of the original Quake engine, coupled with crudely realised coloured lighting. While retaining frame-based animation and a very limited colour palette, it eschewed many important features such as fogging and sprite management. Quake II still uses a simple 256-colour palette for all skins and textures. This has, not unfairly, been described as 'mostly brown and green.'

Nevertheless, it has become enormously popular with licensees. Its extremely robust networking support and comparatively low CPU utilisation has ensured its success. Expect it to be released under the GNU public license in the near future.

Possibly the most impressive implementation of the Quake engine is Half-Life, which managed to work around many of Quake2's flaws. Half-Life was the first FPS to introduce skeletal animation. As the name implies, skeletal animation implements "bones" within character models. This allows game creators to combine animations together: skeletal animation would allow 'look right' and 'fire shotgun' animations to be combined easily. The much-anticipated Team Fortress 2 builds upon Half-Life's advanced usage of the Quake 2 engine. Despite its old-school heritage, TF2 looks like a possible contender for game of the year. (But which year? - Ed)

Soldier of Fortune has seen perhaps the most comprehensive overhaul of this veteran engine. Hats off to the designers at Raven, who have added support for 32-bit colouring, hit locations, the GHOUL rendering engine and a reworked scripting engine.

## QUAKE III

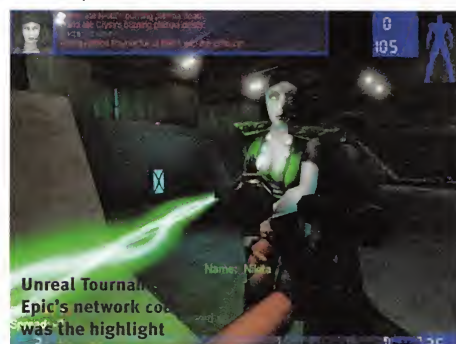
In contrast to Quake II, this third iteration was a revolution - Quake III is a true graphics



powerhouse. And it's not likely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. Whilst it is enormously resource intensive, Carmack's latest incarnation of the Quake engine is unquestionably the most powerful graphics rendering software available on the market. With its gorgeous 32-bit textures, its ultra-powerful shader language and incredibly beautiful texture sets, it's quite simply the prettiest engine ever made.

The most hyped feature of Quake 3 is the use of Bezier curves. If you examine most 3D games, you will notice that they are completely devoid of genuine curved surfaces. It makes games look clunky and levels unconvincing. Although Bezier curves are incredibly stressful for your CPU/GPU to calculate on-the-fly, they can create a much more organic, and ultimately, more realistic gaming environment.

Although Quake III doesn't have skeletal animation, it can achieve a similar effect - by splitting the body of a model up into three sections, (head, torso, legs) designers can combine animations easily. In addition, the engine also features procedural animation on models. For example, if the player looks around within the game, rather than the entire model turning, merely the head or upper torso will rotate. Naturally, this is on the basis that the turn is small



## 3D JARGON EXPLAINED

**Brush** - a solid, rectangular polygonal entity. The building block of any 3D environment.

**API** - Application Programming Interface. A programming tool that translates commands from software to hardware.

**Glide** - A now outmoded graphics rendering API developed for 3dfx Interactive products.

**OpenGL** - Developed by Silicon Graphics,

OpenGL is an enormously popular cross-platform graphics library (API). It works on a huge range of hardware.

**Direct3D** - Widely supported graphics API developed by Microsoft. Included as part of DirectX.

**GNU License** - Users are free to do whatever they want with software they acquire, including making copies for friends and modifying the source code and repackaging it with a distribution charge.





The overhaul Ion Storm has given the Unreal engine for Deus Ex means it's almost unrecognisable.

enough.

The fact that the Quake III engine has been ported to Linux, Macintosh, Dreamcast and the Playstation 2 platform will only ensure its longevity.

## UNREAL

Developed by Tim Sweeney at Epic MegaGames, the Unreal engine has become the most commercially successful game technology ever. Wheel of Time, Nerf Arena and Unreal Tournament are a few examples of the Unreal engine in action. There are also over 20 different games in development, including Duke Nukem Forever, Deus Ex, X-Com Alliance and the awesome Unreal Warfare.

When it was released almost two years ago, Unreal was right at the forefront of game technology. Besides its enormous graphical appeal, it introduced a modular approach to game development allowing for huge flexibility for both the licensee and end-user. Also, the bundled map editor, UnrealED, is still viewed as one of the most powerful tools available to game developers. Other revolutionary features included metallic effects, translucency and animated textures. Despite this, the original Unreal was marred by substandard networking code and its lamentable

reliance on the 3dfx Glide API. To be run at a satisfactory detail level, it demanded a ninja computer system - back in 1998 this alienated a lot of gamers not on the bleeding-edge. Thankfully, the advent of today's 3D accelerators means this is no longer the case.

With the release of Unreal Tournament, the Unreal engine has gone through a major refurbishment. It still looks bloody good, but now comes with across-the-board 3D support and internet play on par with Quake III. Unreal Tournament also added decal support (blood stains and bullet holes), advanced Level of Detail (LOD) technology and skeletal animation.

At present, one of the few drawbacks of the Unreal engine is its low polygon count. Level designers have to be aware of the very limited amount of polygons that can be simultaneously displayed. In sum, this can make some of the levels somewhat blocky in appearance.

## LITTECH

The original Littech engine was developed by Monolith in conjunction with Microsoft. Its most important asset is its efficient use of DirectX; unlike Quake/Unreal, Littech games work on almost every graphics card imaginable. Although its reliance on the questionable technology of

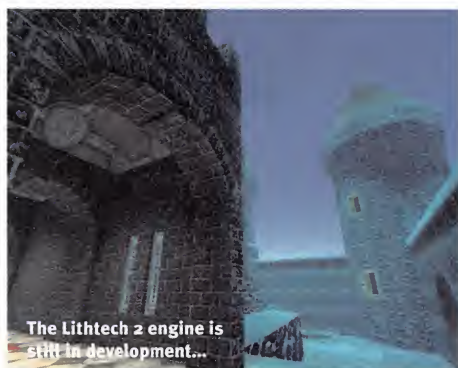


Wheel Of Time used the Unreal engine to create some imposing architecture.



DirectX makes it quite slow, games like Blood 2 and Shogo MAD stand as testament to Littech's graphical prowess.

Littech 2.0 was written from the ground up as a competitor to Quake III. Although very little is known at this stage, Littech 2.0 purportedly meshes broad-based compatibility and ease of programming with the advanced features of a truly next-generation engine. For instance, Littech 2.0 includes realtime tessellation (a la Messiah), and a dynamic lighting system literally second to none. We can't wait. ■



The Littech 2 engine is still in development...



But it looks mightily impressive.



Blood 2 pushed the first Littech engine to the max.



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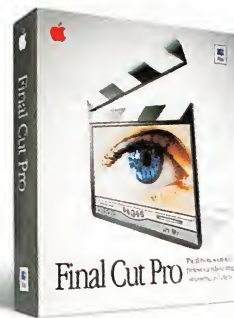
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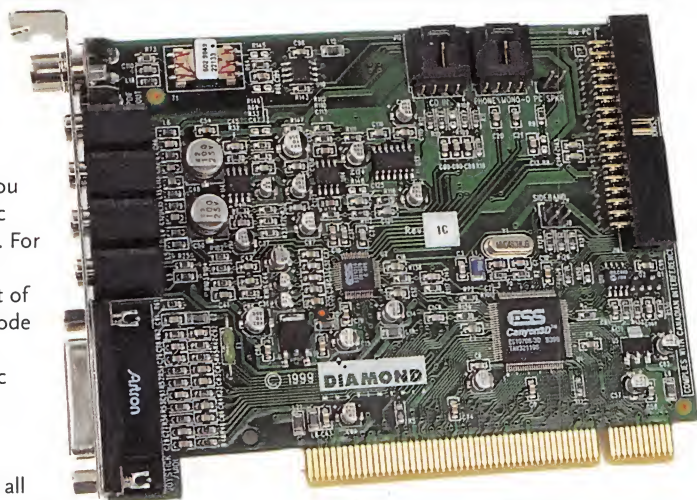
**RRP: \$170 DISTRIBUTOR: DIAMOND MULTIMEDIA**

With an integrated Aureal processor, the Diamond MX300 ushered in a new era of PC audio. Diamond knows that the MX400 will have to deliver if it's going to be a worthy successor to the Monster Sound MX300 - The MX400 departs from the design tradition of the MX200 and MX300, and doesn't offer an Aureal chipset at the heart of the card. Instead, the MX400 offers an ESS Canyon 3D chip to power its sound effects. The Canyon3D is a new chipset from ESS technologies. Besides the MX400, it is also featured on the exceptional Terratec DMX soundcard, reviewed in issue #45.

The MX400 is an inexpensive sound card, with an impressive set of features: it provides for 4 Speakers, and includes support not only for the Microsoft Direct Sound3d API but Creative EAX, Aureal A3D 2.0 and Sensaura Interactive Positioning. Also of note is an expansion board port on the rear of the card, which will be for the upcoming Rio 600 daughterboard. Basically, this will add an FM tuner to your computer, as well as hardware

Mp3 encoding and decoding. What does this mean? As you probably know, MP3 is an enormously popular compression format for digital audio - it allows you to cram CD quality music into an acceptable space. For such tightly compressed music, it takes quite a lot of processing power to decode the music for playback. Similarly, encoding music takes a lot of computing horsepower. By using a customised Sharp DSP, Diamond plan to offload all these tasks to the daughterboard. It's part of the ongoing trend in computing to offload processing from the CPU and onto specialised auxiliary equipment.

The MX400 would be a lot more exciting if



the FM tuner and the hardware MP3 encoding engine were included with the base product. Without it, however, the MX400 is a competent, if unexciting, solution at a reasonable price.

**Hugh Norton-Smith**

## GAMESTER Evolution Motion Sensitive Control System

**RRP: \$129 DISTRIBUTOR: LIVEWIRE**

Based on innovative 'G-Force Tilt Technology', the peripherals firm Gamester has come up with a whole new range of motion sensitive controllers. The company has used an 'accelerometer chip' from Analog Devices and incorporated it into a dedicated games controller. G-Force Tilt technology uses a microscopic spring system that senses gravitational forces and converts them into an electrical signal. Essentially, this allows you to control a game by simple hand movements. The Evolution is comprised of two distinct parts: First, the Reactor, which is a glove-like contraption that slips over the palm of the hand. The GripStick is held in the same hand, and is used for lateral control and action buttons.

One thing stands in the way of this awesomely original product being a perfect 10. And that is that it is intensely, overwhelmingly, brain-blowingly irritating. Absolutely marvellous as a concept, the devil's work as actuality. Honestly, I tried to like this product. Suffice to say, after several exasperating hours of waving my hands around like an epileptic conductor, I had to revert to my trusty Gravis control pad - The main problem with the Evolution Motion Control System is the complete lack of, well, control. For the few games that do work properly with the EMCS, a conventional control pad is a far superior solution.

A final caveat: the drivers failed to work under Windows 2000.

Computer gaming has a long and turbid history of shit peripherals, perhaps beginning with

the infamous Aura Interactor. The Evolution Motion Sensitive Control System continues this illustrious tradition. Avoid. Like a rabid dog.

**Hugh Norton-Smith**





# KÄRNA Razer Boomslang 2000

**RRP: \$199 DISTRIBUTOR: INNOVISION**

Everything about the Razer Boomslang is different. Instead of arriving in a regular cardboard box, the Boomslang comes in a cylindrical tin designed especially to house...oh, who am I kidding, it comes in a cake tin - but its got 'Razer' embossed on the top in a really cool font. The Boomslang looks and feels like no other mouse on the market and is designed especially for gamers. Everything from the extra long cord to the incredible tracking resolution is designed to increase your frags in your domain of choice. The Razer Boomslang 2000 has a tracking resolution of 2000 dpi (compare that to the 450 or so dpi of the Intellimouse Explorer) this promises incredible pinpoint precision, backed up with a 6 MIPS processor so that the mouse will never get ahead of itself. The drivers and documentation are excellent - it was really refreshing to get info on how to best

use the mouse in hot-blooded deathmatches rather than dire warnings of RSI and carpal tunnel syndrome. This mouse has two major drawbacks.

The first is a matter of taste - some

people love the feel of the Razer, others just can't get used to it - you don't want to realise that you fall into the latter category after you've dealt with the second drawback - the price. The Boomslang is the most expensive mouse on the market. It is not competitively priced, but who cares when you rule your server, right? If you can part with the dough the Razer Boomslang may be just the edge you've been looking for; nevertheless, try before you buy - don't say I didn't warn you.

Sebastian Fern



# CREATIVE Nomad II

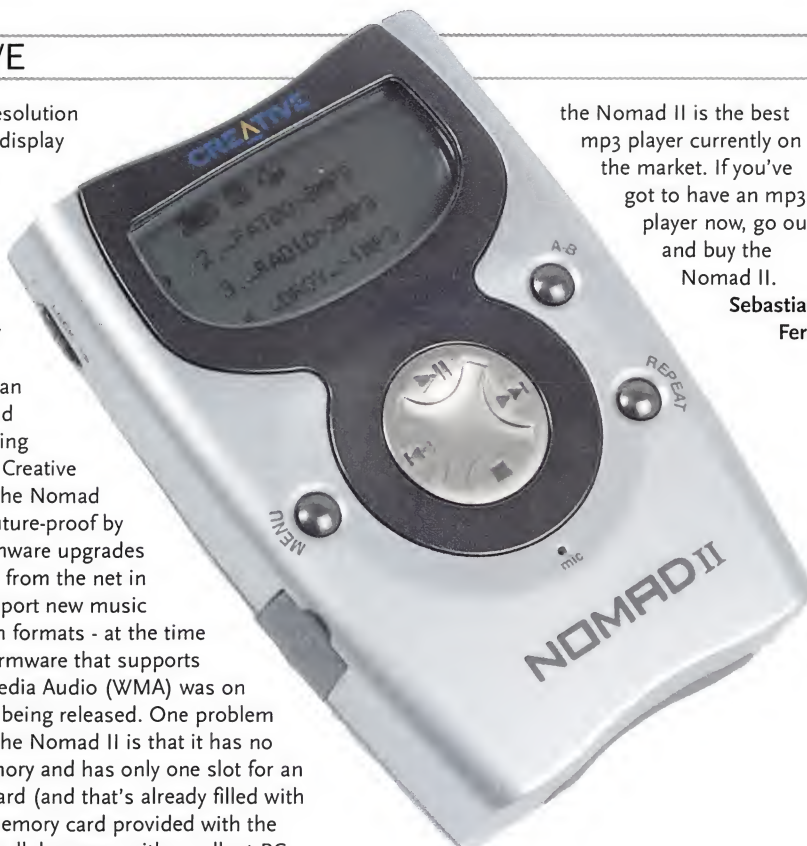
**RRP: \$729 DISTRIBUTOR: CREATIVE**

The Creative Nomad was one of the top players in the portable mp3 player market. With the release of the Nomad II, Creative is vying for the number one position. With this little beauty they may just get it, too. The Nomad II is part of Creative's new range of mp3 players, including the incredible 6Gb Nomad Jukebox. What distinguishes this from any other player on the market? First and most importantly, three letters - USB. Finally manufacturers have woken up and realised that serial transfer is just too slow for this kind of device. Downloading an entire album in less than five minutes makes an mp3 player a much more attractive option. The Nomad II has a

large high-resolution backlit LCD display and an intuitive GUI menu system. Not only can you play mp3's but there's also an FM tuner and voice recording capabilities. Creative have made the Nomad II virtually future-proof by allowing firmware upgrades downloaded from the net in order to support new music compression formats - at the time of writing, firmware that supports Windows Media Audio (WMA) was on the verge of being released. One problem I have with the Nomad II is that it has no built in memory and has only one slot for an expansion card (and that's already filled with the 64Mb memory card provided with the player). Overall, however, with excellent PC connectivity software and all the above features,

the Nomad II is the best mp3 player currently on the market. If you've got to have an mp3 player now, go out and buy the Nomad II.

Sebastian Fern





# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SETUP



HARDWARE ON THE BLINK? JUST ASK **DANIEL RUTTER**.

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**PO BOX 634**  
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When you write remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated \*.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

## GAMING BEAST?

**Q>** Every now and again I read up on what is considered the "ultimate gaming beast", usually a P-III 700 with a GeForce. Well, I had the pleasure of visiting IT2000 and I was treated to a SGI workstation demonstration, I think the model was an SGI 1400.

This system produced a crystal clear, super smooth flight sim that was reported to be used by actual fighter pilots to train on. My question is, is there any chance a system like this could be compatible with games like Quake 3 and Half-Life (OpenGL), because if so, than how much would one cost, considering the gaming beast theoretically has no price tag limit on it?

One last question, one SGI workstation used by the French military to replicate nuclear bombs operates at 5 trillion operations per second, could you please explain exactly how much faster this is to, say, a PIII 500 with a TNT2 card?

**Dutch, Email**

**A>** There's every chance an SGI 1400 (base price: \$US7500) would be compatible with PC games because it doesn't actually use an esoteric processor; it's just a Xeon box (500MHz originally, 550MHz for current models). If it was a 1400M, it would have had Windows NT Server installed by default. The 1400L uses Linux, by default, and there are versions that come with no OS as well. In any case, you can play any PC game that'll run on whatever OS you install. That's not at all what these computers are meant to do, though; they're mid-range server boxes, with lots of drive bays, redundant hot-swappable drives

and power supplies, remote management and so on. If they were showing off graphics in particular, you were probably looking at an O2 or Octane workstation, powered by a MIPS R12000 processor. You might be able to lay your hands on an Octane for less than \$30,000, I dunno.

Back on Planet Earth, a 550MHz PII or PIII Xeon is, for game purposes, no faster than an equivalently clocked (and much cheaper) plain PII or PIII. And for PC games - as opposed to pro flight simulators, which do a LOT more number crunching - workstations and servers don't perform any better than desktop machines.

Assuming you can even get the PC game RUNNING on the

workstation, that is. A current super-fast PC 3D board, like a GeForce, is optimised all down the line for games. The driver software deliberately cuts corners for more speed; sure, you've got a complete OpenGL implementation, but things that games never do are often neglected, and very slow. Professional 3D boards and their drivers are optimised for accuracy of rendering, and are good at things that game cards don't have to do, like the `glReadPixels()` command for getting rendered data BACK from the graphic card's framebuffer to a program. For many rendering tasks, a GeForce doesn't look too shabby compared with the far more expensive professional boards, but for `glReadPixels()` an Octane will spank it by a factor of about FIFTY. Looking across the benchmarks, you see this sort of thing in various areas - the hot PC card's results compared with the pro board are OK, OK, OK, appalling, OK, OK, disastrous, OK, OK,

embarrassing... and so on. For things they're not meant to do - anti-aliased wireframe renders, for example - the game cards stink. It's not really a hardware issue; their drivers are just tuned for games.

With regard to the French nuke simulator - with numbers like that (five trillion integer operations per second's impressive enough; five trillion FLOATING POINT operations per second is a world-beating number), I think you've got your wires crossed. That's a very serious supercomputer, not a workstation.

Since SGI now owns Cray, ultra-fast machines with its name on 'em might be Crays. But Cray doesn't presently make any stand-alone machines anything like that fast. For the number you quoted to be correct, it could perhaps be a massively multiprocessor machine, like the US Advanced Strategic Computing Initiative (ASCI) machines, that use literally THOUSANDS of off-the-shelf Pentium Pro CPUs.

Of course, unless you're talking about one specific task, raw "megaFLOPS" numbers mean nothing. A minicomputer with tons of bandwidth between its components, but an apparently weedy processor, can annihilate a desktop machine with a "five times faster" 1000MHz CPU but crummy storage bandwidth. But only for minicomputer tasks that make use of that bandwidth. Games don't.

## BITTEN BY BUS WIDTH

Within the last month I have updated my graphics card from a 16MB Creative Voodoo Banshee to an Octek 32MB TNT2 Vanta. Man, did I ever get sucked in.

The packaging for the Octek card stated that it was a full 128-bit engine, but when I loaded up Powerstrip, it reported that the card was using a 64-bit pipeline. A few issues back this very magazine warned of the dangers of the 64-bit pipeline and here I was buying one...!

Well, needless to say, it ran like a dog and after complaining to the guy that I bought it from, it was duly



The SGI1400. \$US7500 worth of not very exciting game computer.



# LETTER OF THE MONTH

## CELERON VERSUS P-III

**Q>** Presently I am the owner of a humble Celeron 400 with 64MB of PC66 RAM and an ATI Rage IIc that doesn't support OpenGL (insert the expletive of your choice).

This beast was purchased in the form of a Hewlett-Packard, and is still under their warranty until the end of May. Needless to say I've got big things planned for the start of June.

Unfortunately, having to watch the pennies, I have to be very particular about my upgrades. But at the same time, being an FPS addict I need some serious muscle. My question then is, what is the difference

between a Celeron II and a PIII? I understand they both have the SSE instructions, but what else?

I am considering a Celeron II 600. If the primary use of my machine is gaming, do I need a PIII? Also, do both these Processors only run with certain RAM, ie. PC133, or could I use my weedy 64MB PC66?

Thanks for any advice.

**Avan Ross, NZ**

**A>** The Celeron II looks like a very, VERY tasty CPU for the budget-conscious gamer - actually, for home and small office PC buyers in general. With P-III power and a 66MHz stock Front Side Bus (FSB), you get current technology grunt on old motherboards.

Well, not ALL old motherboards: the stock voltage for the C-II 566 and 600 is a miserly 1.5 volts, so motherboards that don't dig the new Coppermine-series Flip Chip Pin Grid Array (FC-PGA) processors will miserably fail to work with the new Celerons as well. Some such motherboards just need a BIOS update, and they're fine; other ones are hopeless cases.

If your motherboard can handle the processor, but has a Slot 1 CPU connector, you'll need a "slotkey" adaptor board to be able to plug in for the Socket 370 Celeron II. But that'll only set you back another \$25 or so.



**LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THE MOST EXCELLENT SIDEWINDER AND DUAL STRIKE CONTROL PADS FROM MICROSOFT'S PREMIERE RANGE OF GAME CONTROLLERS. CHEERS MICROSOFT!**

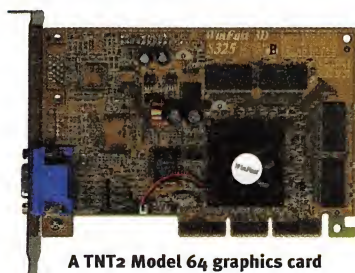
The Celeron II uses a 66MHz Front Side Bus (FSB), so your old RAM will be fine, and it can run on any old motherboard that outputs the right voltage - i440BX chipset boards, for instance. This low FSB also makes the new CPU quite overclockable, although I'll betcha your Hewlett-Packard motherboard won't let you change the FSB to a non-stock setting.

What's the down side? Well, the C-II only has 128 kilobytes of Level 2 cache, versus the 256 kilobytes of the Coppermine P-III, with which it's otherwise almost identical. The smaller cache and slower FSB make the C-II slower than the P-III at the same clock speed, but not a LOT slower. With Australian launch prices of about \$460 and \$475 retail for the 566 and 600MHz units - by the time you read this, the C-II should be in stores - it's an attractive prospect even if you don't intend to overclock.



replaced with a 32MB Creative Blaster TNT2 Value card. The difference between cards was amazing, and my question is: whilst both cards run using a 64-bit pipeline, does the brand name really make that much of a difference? Because both cards were using NVIDIA reference drivers and Kingpin and Q3A both look and play amazingly on this card...

**Bernie Rourke, Email**



A TNT2 Model 64 graphics card

**A>** The brand name makes no difference at all. At a given clock speed, one card based on a given

chipset will be exactly the same speed as another. Some cards have better chip coolers and higher-spec RAM and can therefore be clocked faster; other cards are worth more because of their trimmings, like TV in and/or out, groovy software bundles and so on. And drivers can make a significant difference to performance - although not if you just use the chipset manufacturer's reference drivers, as you did.

So why the difference? Simple! The Octek card has the "Vanta" version of the TNT2 chipset, which as you say has a 64-bit memory bus (the actual graphics rendering side of things is still 128-bit, hence the somewhat misleading sticker), but has default core and memory clock speeds of only 100 and 125MHz, respectively. The Creative card uses the Model 64 ("M64") version of the TNT2, which ALSO has a 64-bit memory bus, but its default clock speeds are 125 and

## TECH TIPS



Oh, come ON, you kids in the back row. It can't be THAT funny.

### KNOW YOUR SCREWS!

People keep getting the various... um... threaded fasteners... used in PCs mixed up. Sometimes disastrously.

In the above picture, note that the three fasteners on the right all have the same coarse thread; the one on the left has finer threads. That finer-threaded screw type is for mounting floppy and CD-ROM drives, and nothing else.

The other three screws (from left to right) are: a short screw for mounting hard drives (longer ones can thread in too far and damage the drive electronics); a brass stand-off for mounting motherboards to cases (a few cases don't need these, but most do); and the standard hexagonal-Phillips-head screw used for holding most cases together, holding cards in place, and holding motherboards down.

If a screw feels funny as you tighten it, you may have picked the wrong one. Nothing in a computer needs to be wrenched on like the head bolts of a car engine; be gentle, and you'll be less likely to, ah, screw up.



## TECH TIPS

### GOT A BLOTCHY SCREEN?

If there are coloured blotches on your monitor, you've either got to stop throwing foodstuffs at the talking paperclip in Microsoft Office, or you've got a "purity problem". Stop giggling, you boys down the back. Purity problems like this are caused by magnetic contamination - some part of the monitor has been magnetised by something, and the monitor's built-in degaussing coil isn't powerful enough to demagnetise it. The problem is curable. Any decent TV or computer repair place should have a "degaussing wand", which is a hefty rotating-field electromagnet that you wave around things, like monitors, which you want to demagnetise. If they're nice, they'll do the job for free. Minor purity problems can be cured in seconds.

150MHz. Presto, more speed. Not as MUCH more speed as you seem to be perceiving, but more - and more speed POTENTIAL, too, as you can probably overclock the M64 card further. The standard NVIDIA Windows drivers have had overclocking potential built in for a few revisions, now. You need to change a couple of Registry settings by hand or by merging a little patch file like the one at <http://www.g256.com/files/reg/coolbit.s.reg>. After doing this and rebooting, you go to the tab for your graphics card in Display Properties, click the Additional Properties... button, and select the Hardware options tab. You have to restart once after turning on the overclocking feature; then, you can easily twiddle the card's clocks up and down.

### 3D CONFUSION

**Q>** When I purchased my computer, I was horrified to find that I had been given a 1MB S3 Trio64V+ video card. From then on I have always wanted a spunky GeForce 256, but all I could afford was a Voodoo 2. I have read about many articles about S3 based cards having incompatibilities with Voodoo 2.

To top off my frustration I am experiencing many of those problems such as: at times during playing games supporting Direct 3D, the screen will transform into multi-coloured 3D polygons. However, even though I updated the Glide drivers, Glide supported games will sometimes suddenly hang when I browse around the menus for too long. Is there any way of fixing these annoying problems?

Recently I was looking around for a new primary display card to replace my aging S3 Trio. I discovered that all the latest in video hardware like TNTs, TNT2, and GeForce cards were all video accelerators. I was told that having a good video accelerator and a slow primary video display card was not a good combination and it would affect the accelerator's performance.

If I have to replace my S3 Trio and most the new improved graphics cards of today are accelerators, where can I find a good primary video display card?

**Andrew, Email**

**A>** The Trio64V+ is indeed ghastly, but not because of compatibility problems. It's just slow as a wet week.

The S3 968/868 chipsets apparently had some I/O conflict or other with the



The good old Voodoo 2; king of the 3D hill not so long ago...

Voodoo 2, but they're lost in the mists of time. The Trio64, like pretty much every other 2D card on the planet, works perfectly with the Voodoo 2. This is because Voodoo Graphics and Voodoo 2 cards are just an analogue passthrough device that hijacks the video output, cutting off whatever the 2D card's sending, and send their own signal instead. When you're not using 3D mode, these old 3dfx cards just pass through the 2D card's signal and do nothing. When you play a 3D game, the 2D card and its drivers have no idea there's anything unusual happening. If you've got problems that arise, consistently, after a while, they are PROBABLY not caused by software. Maybe something's too hot; take the lid off your computer, let a desk fan blow into it and see if it behaves itself better. If it does, then you need better case ventilation.

Then again, there are lots of other possible hardware-related causes: actual flaky cards, an ailing power supply, crummy voltage regulators - all sorts of things. It's possible that reinstalling Windows would help, but, as I said, I doubt it's a software problem.

Now - find whoever told you that nonsense about primary and secondary cards and tape their mouth shut, until they get a clue. There hasn't been a single "dedicated 3D" card released by anybody, anywhere, since the Voodoo 2. EVERY "3D" card on the market today is a combination 2D/3D card, with blazing fast 2D performance. You need only one graphics card. Which means you can take that S3 thing out into a field and shoot it (*Get your parents' permission first, kids! - Ed*).

### PC HDTV?

With all this talk about HDTV in the future, isn't the difference between our TVs now and of HDTV one of resolution? Our TVs now only support a low resolution, but if HDTV will have a high resolution, then why go out and spend thousands on a

new HDTV when we can install a TV tuner in our PC? Would we get the same picture quality as that of a TV?

And also, if our TVs can't support a higher resolution, then why spend big bucks on DVD - it would be much better to have DVD on your PC just to have the higher resolution.

**Theo, Email**

**A>** There's absolutely no technical reason why you couldn't make a PC TV tuner card that supported HDTV, but none of them can now. The version of HDTV Australia will be using is a digital signal carrying MPEG-2 encoded data; it's thus completely different from old-fashioned analogue TV, but the decoding demands aren't all that scary. PCs can play DVDs with no trouble, as you say; that's essentially just MPEG-2, too. But existing analogue TV tuner hardware is useless for digital TV. The various High Definition Television (HDTV) standards have higher than 1000 pixel vertical resolutions, and these are well within the capabilities of larger current PC monitors.

Smaller monitors, like various cheap 17-inch units, can display 1600x1200 or higher, but they don't actually have enough phosphor dots to do it clearly. They'd give a quite good HDTV display, though. The only problem is that PC monitors aren't very big. Monitors with the fine resolution needed for full-quality HDTV, and the size needed for living room TV watching, are really expensive. Hence the alarming prices for HDTV sets.

And the movie-like 16:9 width-to-height "aspect ratio" HDTV can use (versus the 4:3 aspect ratio of ordinary TV and PC screens) makes the tubes much more expensive again, unless you're willing to "letterbox" the video and leave the top and bottom blank.

Regular TV, in case you're wondering, doesn't have a fixed resolution; it's got a definite number of LINES (625, for PAL signals like we get in Australia), but the number of COLUMNS varies depending on the quality of the signal, the picture tube, and the standard used for the measurements. And there are lots of standards to choose from. And DVD doesn't really stretch the abilities of quality TV sets - the maximum resolution for PAL DVD video is 720 x 576 pixels. This is more than small and/or cheap TVs can clearly display, but bigger and better sets can show all of the detail. PC monitor resolution is overkill for DVD.



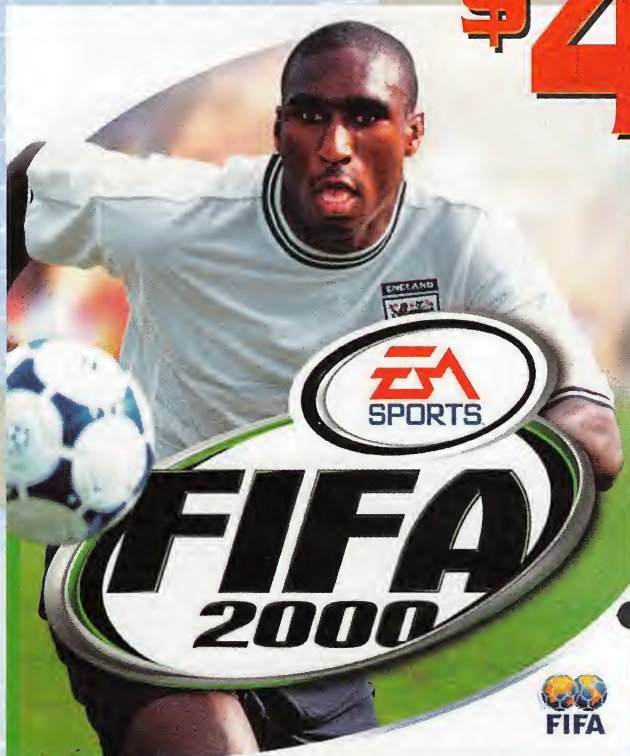
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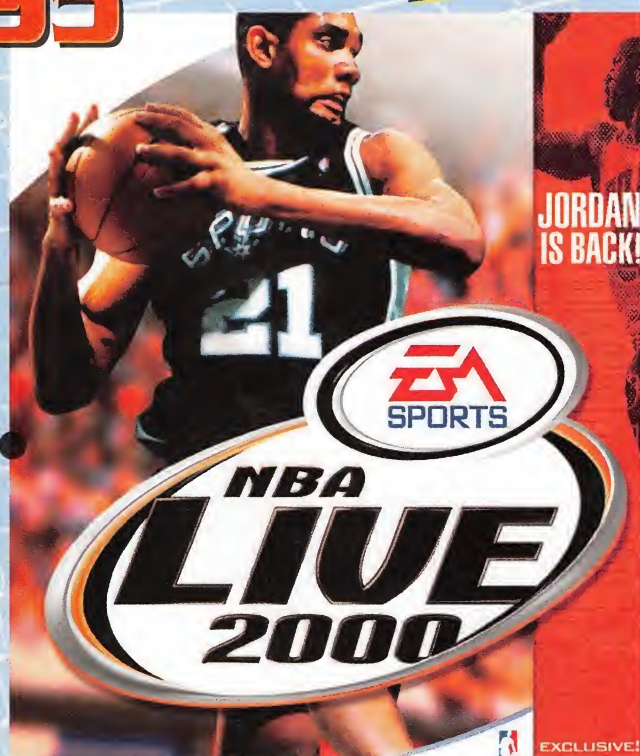
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# CD POWERPLAY #50

## Starting CD PowerPlay

Welcome to the latest edition of CD PowerPlay. This month's discs include some of the hottest demos from around the world. This month we feature the latest in the popular Need for Speed series; Porsche Unleashed, along with the Star Wars 3D realtime strategy game; Force Commander. We've also got all the latest and coolest demos we could get our hands on.

As always, navigation through the online menus is easy. Simply click on the category you want and then select the game or utility. We hope you enjoy this month's CD and hope to see you back next month for another dose of gaming goodness.

**cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au**

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

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**Redfern NSW 2016 (No postage required)**



## PATCHES

### Rollcage Stage II -V1.0A

Adds bump mapping support for Matrox G400 cards.

### Imperium Galactica 2 V.104

Fixes "Kra'Hen message bug"

### Nfs-Highstakes V4.44

- ProxyTool.exe added to the Network Play System/Utility directory.
- Enables you to set your proxy IP and Port if your ISP so requires.
- Hacking cars is harder to do now, so there should be less cheating and crashing.
- 71 connection error remedied.

### Startrek Armada V1.1

Issues which this patch addresses:

Many compatibility issues with a variety of cards including: Geforce, TNT2, Intel 810 and others.

The Klingon Shockwave has received a new effect.

The Borg Transwarp Gate now functions in a different manner. It costs one bubble to activate and will drain at a constant rate. You can turn it off to conserve energy and reuse it before it is fully charged.

The Gravity Mines can now be fired while cloaked.

Special Weapons can no longer be targeted under the shroud. Artillery can no longer target things that are out of the player's shared LOS.

The Construction Ship's build menu has been reordered making it easier to use.

Made several multiplayer map changes to augment game play on these maps.

A memory leak in the Multiplayer shell was plugged.

A bug in the Single Player shell,

## DISC 1

# Need for Speed

## PORSCHE UNLEASHED



**Category:** Driving Sim  
**Developer:** Electronic Arts  
**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX  
 ■ True to the award-winning Need for Speed heritage, the latest in the series delivers the next level of mind-numbing open road racing experiences with an extensive collection of cars from the 50-year history of the most storied

performance car manufacturer in the world ...Porsche. Push every boundary to unleash the potential of these incredible vehicles while weaving through traffic, against fierce competition, and escaping the police to ultimately discover your own limits. Experience the thrill of piloting the historic and future line-up of road and race cars in ways only you could dream of.



## PATCHES

which created strange behavior in the mission progression, was fixed.

General Multiplayer stability fixes.

Addresses compatibility issues with certain CD-ROM drives.

IPX was added as a new option for LAN games.

**Force Commander 1.1**

Improves stability for Internet play.

Improves responsiveness of the interface in high-lag situations.

It is required that this patch be installed to play on the MSN Gaming Zone, or against other users with the patch installed. Saved games from the release version will not work if you install the patch. Player files are still compatible, so your campaign progress will not be lost. If you finish the mission you're on before you install the patch, you won't need to play that mission again.

**Majesty Update #2**

The primary goal of Update#2 is to enhance the game speed of Majesty - particularly in the multiplayer environment. It does this primarily by making improvements to the network code, as well as optimizing the game's memory handling. Aside from overall speed improvements, you'll notice a decrease in the "halting" behavior of characters when a significantly slower machine is involved in a multiplayer game. Update#2 includes a number of smaller fixes, as well, resulting in cleaner and more reliable play. It also includes a new feature, thanks to the insightful feedback of the official Majesty forum (see <http://www.majestyquest.com>). We've included a set of speed hotkeys, allowing you to change game speed on the fly during play. This allows you to slow down the game to follow the activities a given hero, then speed the game back up once the action is resolved - all without bringing up the options menu. This feature only works in single player mode. The speed hotkeys are '<' to decrease speed, and '>' to increase.

While the original goal was to require Update#1 for Zone play, this was not ultimately implemented. However this is the case with Update#2. If you wish to play on the MSN Gaming Zone, you must have Update#2 installed.

**Fading Suns: Noble Armada**

**Category:** RTS  
**Developer:** Holistic Design  
**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ Players begin the game possessing a ship along with crew, weapons and a limited amount of money. The player's goal is to ensure his survival by increasing his armada's size, strength and wealth. Along the way the player uncovers some of the deeper secrets in the universe and finds himself called upon to deal with them. Successfully doing so helps ensure his place among humanity's heroes. Throughout the game there is a large focus on making and breaking agreements between the player and other characters. Any agreement that can be made can be broken. How often and with whom a player makes or breaks an agreement affects other characters' attitudes toward the player. The player can follow a number of different routes to wealth and power. These include trading and helping clear space of

pirates, becoming a pirate himself, making trades that benefit the fleet, acquiring items by force, and hiring out the fleet's services for profit or trade.

**Dance eJay 2**

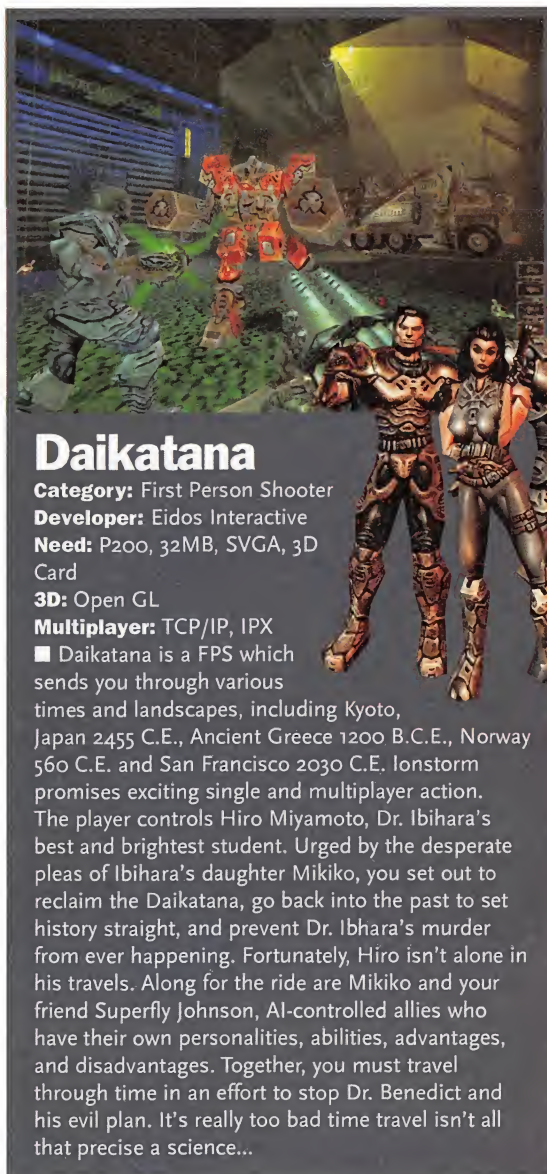
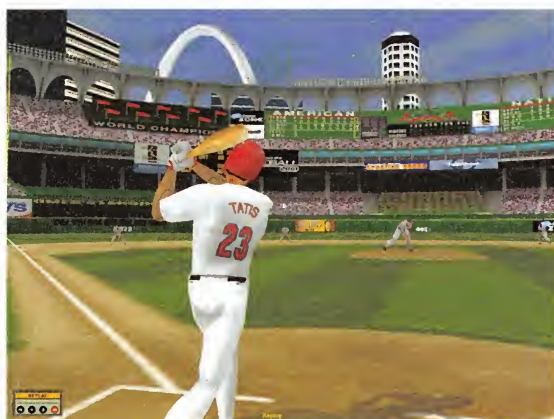
**Category:** Music Sim  
**Developer:** Voyetra Turtle Beach Inc

**Need:** P100, 16MB, SVGA

**3D:** N/A

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ eJay has truly launched a new era for creating music. Making hit dance tracks has never been this easy or this cool! With more than 1,000 of the latest sound samples to choose from, Dance eJay 2 puts you in the driver's seat of a powerful 16-track sequencer that will have everyone jamming to your mixes in no time. When you're done, mix down your songs to wave file format for playback anywhere! You won't believe what you can do in just one session with Dance eJay 2! Also Dance eJay is so easy to use, you don't need any studio experience or musical training to get started. Just a love of music and some good taste!

**Daikatana**

**Category:** First Person Shooter

**Developer:** Eidos Interactive

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Open GL

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ Daikatana is a FPS which sends you through various times and landscapes, including Kyoto, Japan 2455 C.E., Ancient Greece 1200 B.C.E., Norway 560 C.E. and San Francisco 2030 C.E. Ionstorm promises exciting single and multiplayer action. The player controls Hiro Miyamoto, Dr. Ibihara's best and brightest student. Urged by the desperate pleas of Ibihara's daughter Mikiko, you set out to reclaim the Daikatana, go back into the past to set history straight, and prevent Dr. Ibihara's murder from ever happening. Fortunately, Hiro isn't alone in his travels. Along for the ride are Mikiko and your friend Superfly Johnson, AI-controlled allies who have their own personalities, abilities, advantages, and disadvantages. Together, you must travel through time in an effort to stop Dr. Benedict and his evil plan. It's really too bad time travel isn't all that precise a science...

**Microsoft Baseball 2001**

**Category:** Sports

**Developer:** Microsoft

**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ Microsoft Baseball 2001 is the first PC-based baseball game that combines the features of the award-winning Baseball Mogul simulation technology with Microsoft's tradition for eye-popping graphics and gameplay. Players can manage from the front office to the field as the game allows them to trade, sign and manage players while also supervising the finances for their teams over multiple seasons. Microsoft Baseball 2001 captures the excitement

and intensity of an authentic Major League Baseball game ensuring a grand-slam experience for players of all skill levels.

**Ultimate Hunt Challenge**

**Category:** Sports

**Developer:** EA Sports

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ It's all about earning bragging rights as you make your way through the ranks from Greenhorn novice to Master Hunter. Hone your hunting skills as you go in pursuit of North America's most popular game deer, EA SPORTS, second foray into the hunting landscape is Ultimate Hunt Challenge, a premium hunting simulation that boasts the





## CD GUIDE

### PATCHES

#### Janes Fa-18 V1.01F

This update resolves many crash bugs, and contains improvements/enhancements to: multiplayer, wrapper screen, AI, flight model, avionics, and weapon systems

#### Demise V1.00R3.1

Fixes many issues with items, treasures and character file "bloat" problem.

#### Messiah V0.1

What it fixes:

Added polygon strips enable/disable to the video options menu, it was causing a compatibility issue with some GeForce, Rage Pro family and RAGE Mobility chipsets. Enable it if possible for better performance (default is off)  
CD SWAPPING Added a dialog box before Messiah goes fullscreen to allow the player to swap CD and prevent any autoplating applications from launching. The previous message was too small and asked for the audio CD and not CD2.

ELSA Compatible mode added to video menu (fixes "partially invisible" character bugs)  
Mip mapping options added to video menu (fixes voodooIII/Banshee). Default is set to off.

-p command line switch added to disable in game Gamma correction (for users who would like to use Windows Gamma settings)  
SAFEMODE batch files added for troubleshooting  
Fixed Various issues with F5 message.

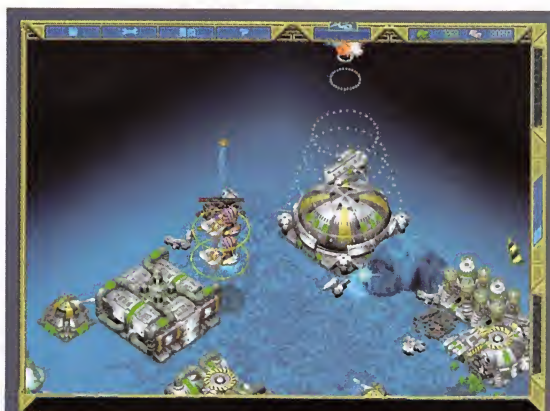
Fixed problems with bots  
Fixed problem with weapon scan room  
Fixed problem with dance contest not recognizing button presses. Fixed problem with CD Music turning back on from save games. Fixed various minor gameplay issues.

#### Homeworld V1.05

v1.05 fixes 'Superscouts' problem, 'Dancing scouts' problem, and increases support Frigate repair rate.

#### Dirt Track

Fixed problem with the mouse cursor not appearing on GeForce video cards  
Miscellaneous small changes and fixes  
This patch contains a new 1.03 version of the DTR multiplayer server. Versions 1.02 and 1.03 of DTR remain compatible  
The v1.03 patch can only be applied to v1.02, if you still have v1.01, you must first install v1.02 before upgrading to v1.03.



### Submarine Titans

**Category:** Strategy - Real Time

**Developer:** Megamedia

**Need:** P200, 16MB, SVGA

**3D:** N/A

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ Sub Titans is a real-time strategy game which puts players in command of one of three civilizations in conflict. Taking place underwater across a range of fully 3D landscapes, players must collect and manage their resources to build the units and structures necessary to defeat their foes. The game includes advanced computer AI and controls that will allow players to give their units series of commands and have them carry them out without supervision, freeing the player to concentrate on other elements.

most realistic graphics and animal AI, the richest, largest 3D worlds, and the best gameplay of ANY hunting game!

### Kawasaki ATV PowerSports

**Category:** Driving Sim

**Developer:** Monkey Byte

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ From the mountains to the deserts, from the farm to the great outdoors... wherever you live and whatever you do, Kawasaki ATV PowerSports makes life FUN!! PowerSports is

designed for one thing, and that's too race. Unlike other racing games, you won't need to spend hours customizing your ATV or designing facial features for your driver. The game is just distilled racing action, with controls for accelerate, brake, and left and right steering. Simply fast and fun.

### Trophy Bass 4

**Category:** Sports - Fishing

**Developer:** Sierra

**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP



### System Shock 2

**Category:** First Person Shooter

**Developer:** EA

**Need:** P200, 64MB, SVGA

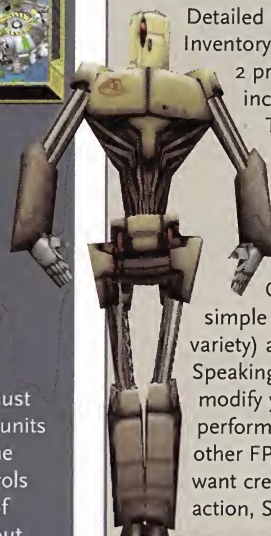
**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Match wits with the egomaniacal cyber-being SHODAN in this unique combination of sci-fi horror role playing and 1st-person gameplay. Incredibly Rich Science Fiction Role-Playing Game System-Detailed Character Generation and Growth, Inventory and Equipping, Traits. System Shock 2 proves that real RPGs can have incredible 3D technology.

This is no ordinary first person shooter. For one thing, it plays more like a Role Playing Game than anything else, with its complex puzzles and inventory management that you have to contend with.

Character interaction (beyond the simple "shoot everything that moves" variety) adds to the intense storyline, too. Speaking of shooting though, the way you can modify your weapons for maximum performance is really cool and is something other FPS makers should look into. So if you want creeping horror, deep gameplay and fast action, System Shock 2 is the game for you.



■ Trophy Bass 4 is a fun, challenging, and highly accurate bass fishing simulation based on real lakes, real lake conditions, and real bass behavior. To succeed, you will need to consider the weather, season, water conditions, and many other factors that affect how real bass act. What you learn playing Trophy Bass 4, seeing the Pro video tips, and reading the "How To" multimedia bass fishing reference will be equally useful on real fishing trips...and vice versa.

### Virtual Sailor

**Category:** Sailing Sim

**Developer:** Ilan Papini

**Need:** P166, 16MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Hey, why not become a virtual sailor? There doesn't seem to be many every-day leisure activities that can't be enjoyed via your PC these days, and sailing the open seas in a boat you can't possibly imagine really owning is another one. So, Virtual Sailor is a accurate-feeling simulation of an open-sail race - players start off by plotting their path on a map, then racing against a handful of computer controlled entrants. A helpful autopilot option is at hand so you can just put your feet up and smell the sea air if that's your idea of a good time.

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THE MONTH



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## PATCHES

**Nox v1.1**

Fixes bugs and enhances single and multiplayer gameplay.

**Pharaoh**

The Enhancement Pack adds new features to Pharaoh to make the game even more fun, including:

The Mission Editor. With the Mission Editor, you can create new scenarios to your heart's content. You choose everything from which monuments to build to which enemies attack to what the terrain looks like. Plus, you can plan requests, gifts and other events.

New Custom Missions. Test your city-building skills with new custom missions.

Many Other New Features. Many other new features have been added to provide more feedback and to improve gameplay. Check out the Readme.txt file that accompanies the download for a complete list of improvements.

**Quake 3 1.16n**

- Unlatched sv\_pure
- Added designer models
- Fixed gamestate reload when running mods in pure modeip 2000 v5.29

**Rally Champions**

- crash after finishing A8 bites the dust!
- 1st-2nd gear problem with A8 cars and fully auto gearbox
- replay cameras now all work
- no tyre change in replay mode
- patchdamage maximum now x1000
- several sound tweaks (hope you like them)
- autoupdatepatch(tm) for those that don't know what to do after downloading
- no longer crashes if no sound card
- reverse gear had way too much grip, now fixed
- no secret cars in arcade mode
- mipmapping (exhaust macaroni) now fixed
- network games are now a lot more stable
- mf hatchback secret car now A8 throughout the code
- car stops now if engine broken and using ACT LABS stick shift
- mirror outline fixed in all modes
- new allsecretcars=0 to kill all secret cars without need to delete ral.dat
- seasoncode=n option for league table season support
- noautoneutral=1 option to stop the auto neutral after a crash
- goto any rally (up/down) on game mode screen
- sensible saving now sets other cars correctly
- save replay slot select bug fixed
- secret cars work correctly in

## UTILITIES

**Bulletproof**

With Bullet Proof FTP, interrupted file transfers are easy to resume. Should you encounter a disconnection when downloading files, Bullet Proof FTP will automatically reconnect and resume downloading. Features include automatic disconnection after downloading files, a queue that supports drag and drop, and a tray icon that displays the progress of file transfers.

**Ulead Cool 3D**

Ulead COOL 3D 3.0 lets you create dynamite 3D titles and animations without the complexity found in traditional 3D programs. The #1 best seller in its category, Ulead COOL 3D lets you add impact to Web pages, videos and presentations.

**ICQ 2000**

ICQ 2000 is the latest release of ICQ ("I seek you"), the popular instant messaging program that lets you communicate with friends and colleagues in real time. This major update lets you get a glimpse of where the popular instant messenger is heading, such as being more firewall-friendly, containing enhanced privacy features, a few cool tweaks and an easier interface.

**Paint Shop Pro 6**

One of the best (if not the best) programs available if your interested in editing images. Almost as good as PhotoShop but much cheaper. The new enhancements and features include dockable tool

bars, enhanced selection options, built in special effects filters, RGB color separation, support for new image formats (Progressive JPG, Mac PICT and PNG with transparency), enhanced resampling, enhanced masking options and much more!

**Toolbar Pro 4**

ToolbarPro is a powerful and highly configurable toolbar for Windows 95/98/2000 and NT environment. The ToolbarPro does not only launch programs or open web pages like many other toolbar programs. Thanks to powerful build-in macro language (contains 100 commands) the ToolbarPro allows a user to perform variety tasks including: inserting text (often used phrases, special characters, etc.), inserting time & date, file operations, clipboard operations, FTP upload & download, windows operation, driving other apps by sending keystrokes to them, text formatting and more.

**Winamp 2.62**

Winamp plays MPEG Layer 2 (MP2) and Layer 3 (MP3) audio streams, and combines extensive functionality with an intuitive interface. It has a full-featured playlist editor and a ten-band graphic equalizer with user-definable presets that can automatically load specific files. It also features Windows Media Technology 4.0 input/output support and the industry-standard Fraunhofer MP3 decoder. Winamp is the winner of the 1999 Shareware Industry Award for Best Sound Program/Utility.

**Winzip 8**

WinZip is a straightforward, fast, and easy-to-use zipping and unzipping utility that includes built-in support for popular Internet file formats such as TAR, ZIP, UUencode, XXencode, BinHex, MIME, and Unix-compressed files. Older ARC, ARJ, and LZH files are supported via external programs. This latest release comes with many great features including the ability to create archives that span multiple floppies (in case you need to zip a huge file), builds self-extracting archives so that recipients without a zipper can decompress the files, as well as offering optional password-protection for archives.

**Winboost 2000**

WinBoost 2000 is a special utility to configure and personalize Windows 98/98SE/95 looks and feels. Using easy to use graphical user interface you can configure hundreds of Windows 98/95 hidden settings, from the Start Menu, Desktop, Accessories, Windows Explorer, to Internet Explorer. This is something that you cannot do on the regular operations. In addition, you will get hundreds of selected Windows 98/95 Tips & Tricks to boost your Windows performance.

**mIRC 5.7**

mIRC is a configurable IRC client that has an intuitive user interface, an events handler, and full send and receive capabilities for DCC (direct client connection) files. It also has color text, aliases, remote commands, backgrounds option,

and sound. It automatically opens Web sites as they are mentioned in a conversation, ignore DCC Sends that match specified filenames or types, and lock the program to disable various features.

**PS2 Rate**

PS2Rate allows you to take greater control over your mouse. This simple 112k download can configure the PS/2 mouse sampling rate on Windows. If you occasionally feel like exterminating your mouse because of its low response time, stop, because it could actually be your operating system. You could either go into your control panel settings to fool around with mouse movements or cut to the chase by using this program to simply arrange the amount of hertz. In just a couple of seconds you can boost the level of output and turn your mouse into a smooth operator.

**Roger Wilco - Mark 1a**

This first, official, nonbeta, nontest release of Roger Wilco presents a small, standalone application that allows you and your friends to talk to each other while playing multiplayer games online. It works with most existing games, such as Half-Life, Quake II, Diablo, Tribes, Unreal, and StarCraft, and will also work with other games that have multiplayer capabilities still in development. In addition to games, Roger Wilco will work with ICQ so that you can chat verbally with your nongamer friends.

## © DISC 2

**Battlezone II**

**Category:** Real Time Strategy

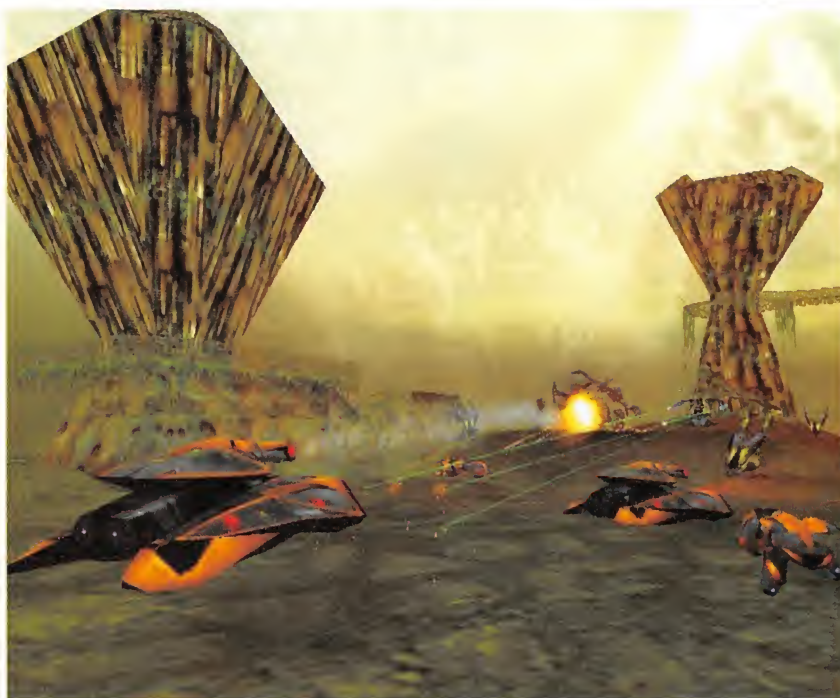
**Developer:** Activision

**Need:** P200, 32MB, Win95/98, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ Battlezone II is the spectacular sequel to the award winning Battlezone. You command your troops from the battlefield rather than above it. By combining the depth of a real-time strategy game with the excitement of first person action, Battlezone II provides the ultimate expression of action-oriented strategic gameplay. Drive a variety of futuristic combat vehicles including a lumbering walker, a





## PATCHES

split screen mode  
 - load/save game screen tidier with alternate game information  
 - no interiors for secret cars or split screen mode  
 - control setting now longer overwritten (was broken in some game modes)  
 - wipers and rain for puma and os lancer  
 - backfire works correctly in split screen mode  
 - load/save car setup no longer resets map to clocaenog  
 - if run out of time but cross finish line now lets you stay in race  
 - can no longer press reset at start to bounce other car off road!  
 - flog lights controlled by light switch now  
 - and lots of other little bits...

**Star Fleet Command v1.03**

Movies should now record properly during Mplayer games. Shield strengths have been halved for all ships across the board. Some other systems/weapons have been altered back to their normal damage levels to compensate for this.

Nuclear Space Mines do 35 points of damage.

Suicide Shuttles do 18 points of damage.

The number of t-bombs has been reduced.

Explosion strengths have been reduced.

Cloaking times have been tweaked to be between the 1.02.01 and 1.01 versions.

Non-overloaded Photon Torpedoes do their full damage at close range.

A bug with Legendary Weapons Officers affecting Photons at point blank range has been fixed.

Missiles require a short distance to arm their warheads, and can no longer be fired at ranges less than 1.

Plasma Torpedoes require more power to hold inconsistent with their power requirements to charge). Type-F launchers hold for 0 power.

Bases rotate slightly slower.

ESGs will not start charging until the field discharges or drops.

A better variety of ships should be available in the single-player campaign games for all races, but especially Romulans and Gorns.

A few bugs with Alpha Strikes (SHIFT-Z) have been fixed.

Cloaked ships may launch shuttles.

Shuttle and missile prices have been adjusted.

Various problems with single-player scripts have been fixed.

A new official tournament



mammoth assault tank or a speedy mortar bike. Or get out of your craft to act as a stealthy commando on foot. You'll command a range of vehicles, buildings, and units while blasting enemies, organizing troops and managing resources... all within a first-person view that puts the warfare in your face!

*Note - Some people had problems with our last Battlezone II Demo. This version should run fine.*

**Time Machine**

**Category:** Adventure

**Developer:** Cyro Interactive

**Need:** P2-233, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** N/A



**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Cryo presents the adaptation of one of the most fantastic adventures in literature. Inspired by the work of H.G. Wells and the theme of time travel, Time Machine is a game of hitherto unseen richness and an atmosphere filled with mystery.

The hero, Wells himself, is

projected into the year 800,000 by his famous machine that disappears on arrival. Wells discovers a future ravaged by temporal storms where people struggle to survive amidst the currents that drag their memories away into the depths of time. A world of sand and danger, where the sun never shines.

**Force Commander**

**Category:** Strategy

**Developer:** Lucas Arts

**Need:** P2-266, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

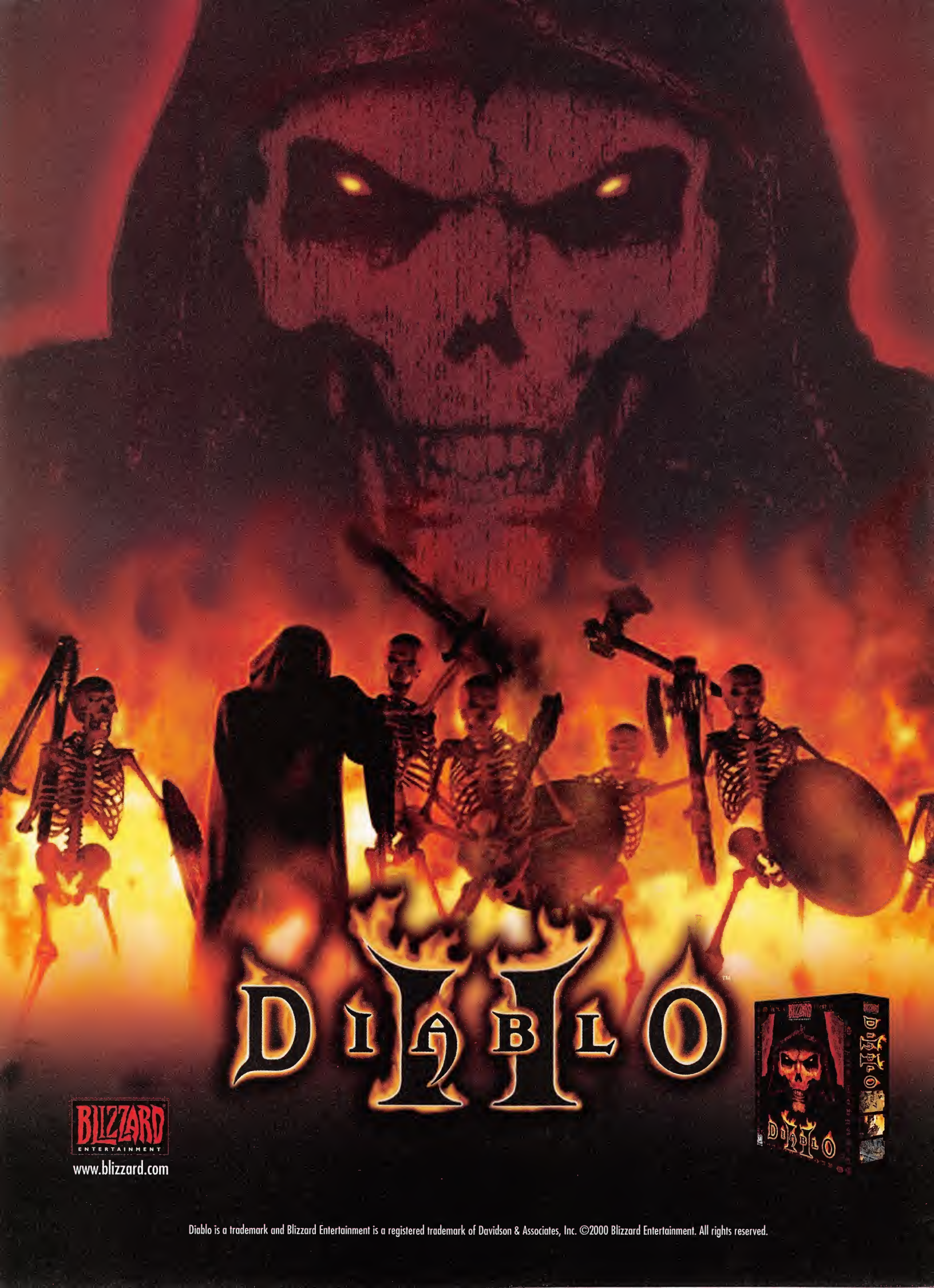
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ PREPARE FOR GROUND ASSAULT Think you have what it takes to command a battalion of AT-ATs? Or to defend the Rebel stronghold at Hoth? Prove it in Star Wars: Force



Commander, an intense real-time ground combat experience like no other. As you weave through the epic storyline, lead both the Empire's monolithic military might and the ragtag-yet-resourceful Rebels. Keep your war machine humming in single- and multiplayer modes. The ultrarealistic 3D terrain and vehicles give you the power to guide your troops to victory. This is war. This is Force Commander!





# DIABLO



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## PATCHES

multiplayer scenario has been added.

### The Sims

This patch fixes bugs and improves gameplay.

### Uefa2000

Contains many small bug fixes

### Unreal Tournament

#### Known Issues

If you are using D3D and Unreal Tournament did not automatically detect D3D when you first installed (so you had to manually select it), you should change your video driver to D3D again after installing this patch. This will allow Unreal Tournament to optimize its settings for your video card. To reset your D3D driver, go to the Options->Preferences menu and select the Video tab. Then click on the change driver button to re-select D3D. We have seen an instance of a GeForce 256 displaying many world polygons flashing and flickering. If this happens for you, press TAB type "preferences" to bring up the advanced options menu. Then set UseVideoMemoryVB to True in the Direct3D Render Device options.

Many Bug fixes, including:

- Fixed occasional green skins on players.
- fixed clients continuing to get data from servers after disconnecting
- fixed death message when killed in pressure chamber
- fixed keyboard key sticking problem (thanks Chris Norden from Ion Storm/Deus Ex)
- fixed actors getting beginplay events twice if spawned while level is being brought up
- Fixed speech menu bug with mouse staying active.
- Fixed speech menu text positions.
- Fixed bug in bot Assault AI for dealing with team cannons

New features (Gameplay):

- Can now use number and arrow keys to navigate voice menu
- Random bots picks from all 32 (not first 16) - including the specially configured ones
- Can summon specific bots: 'AddBotNamed Alarik' adds the bot with the name Alarik (if he's in the list of configured bots)
- Improved bot AI about triggering pressure zone when player is in it
- Changed xDSL and cable modem clientspeed to 10000
- No longer need to type 'iamtheone' for cheats in single player
- Demos can now play looping - demoplay demofile?loop
- Turbo/hardcore mode is now shown in UBrower for team games



Only one being is capable of restoring the balance of time and help Wells find his own era again - a mythical being, a Demi-god, The Master of the Hourglass: KHRONOS.

### Vyrus: Destruction of the Untel Empire

**Category:** Action/Shooter

**Developer:** Chilicon Valley

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Help Jack Kelkinn to

destroy the worst AI computer ever made by the Untel corporation engineers. Take the commands of the wildest assault vehicle, the Vyrus AM-030. Rockets, mines, grenades, laser, machine guns, flame throwers, missiles, there is no shortage of weapons. Destroy every dangerous vehicles controlled by the main CPU and find your way, floor by floor, to disconnect it. If you don't do it for humanity, do it at least for money.



### Klingon Academy

**Category:** Space Sim

**Developer:** Interplay

**Need:** P2-233, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP

■ Star Trek Klingon Academy is a prequel to Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country. Christopher Plummer reprises his role as General Chang and David Warner as Chancellor Gorkon. Stunning visuals and dramatic lighting effects create a realistic 3D universe to explore and conquer. 25 action packed missions put you in the middle of all out war. Blow your friends out of the stars via the Internet in a Deathmatch, or join with them to defend the Empire in Cooperative missions.



### Evolva

**Category:** 3D Shooter

**Developer:** Computer Artworks

**Need:** P2-266, 32MB, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Evolva is a tactical shoot-em-up for the PC which immerses the player in a visually stunning 3D world offering a rich gaming experience. Driven by Computer Artworks' A-Life technology, this world and its alien inhabitants form a challenging and actually living

environment. Evolva sees the player having to fight against an alien parasite that has infected a planet. This parasite has an army of guardians to protect it and they will have to be stopped if the player is to be able to ultimately stop the parasite itself. The player takes control of a team of customisable creatures called Genohunters and guides them through a unique gaming world that mixes the excitement of a fast paced shoot-em-up with the tactical elements of a strategy game.



### Movies

#### Black And White

Over 100MB of pre-release special footage of Black and White. Includes movies and wallpaper pics.

#### Flying Heroes AVI



# IN-BOX

Letters Tip #11 Capital letters aren't an extinct species. Please re-acquaint yourselves with them.

WRITE TO: PC PowerPlay Letters, Level 6, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. [letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

## Mature

I am writing this letter in response to Christian Kavanagh's letter in PCPP #48. Just because I'm fourteen, it doesn't mean I'm not a veteran gamer. I am a fourteen year old gamer and I've been gaming since my older brother introduced me to the good old Sinclair Spectrum Z80 back when I was about six or seven. I can still name a legion of games for the Spectrum. Then, I discovered games like Dune II (which my friend and I have beaten) and Wolfenstein 3D (beat that too). Then we got the latest and greatest computer, a 486 with a good old 16 bit Sound Blaster. These were the days of DOOM (beaten) and TIE Fighter (beaten too). Get the message yet?

Graphics? I don't care about graphics! If the gameplay is good, BRING IT ON! After two years of no games (I moved to another country), I returned to Australia, bought a new computer, which I have to this very day (a Pentium II 233 with 128MB RAM and a Voodoo 1 - Quake 3 runs like a dream. Yeah, I was freaked out too). I am now in a gaming league, which is comprised of gamers mainly between the ages of 14 - 18 and a majority of that number is 14 - 16. We are the biggest and oldest Star Wars gaming league on the net, and most likely the best.

So, Mr. Lag King, what do you have to say about this?

### Reaperman, Email

*Exiled to a country with no games? Ouch! The debate over what constitutes a true hardcore game isn't going to end any time soon. But consider this: couldn't time wasted bickering over who's hardcore and who isn't be better spent simply enjoying playing games?*

## Strange Misconceptions

Hey PCPP,

You know, I always thought that the PC PowerPlay team were a whole stack of guys in a warehouse in some remote part of Australia, and all day they sat at their little desks and reviewed games and such. And you had big monkey guards with whips walking around whipping you and shouting "eeeenaeeee".

Until recently I saw that picture of all you guys and I realised you were a bunch of normal guys and a friend told me you were in an office in NSW and there were no monkey guards.

I was shocked. So tell me, are there monkey guards that shout "eeeenaeeee" while whipping you to make you work faster?

And is your crew really that small?

### Matt, Email

*There were, in fact, whip-wielding primates who patrolled the office and beat us into submission whenever our attention to our work wavered. But*

*they were quickly monopolised by the Hyper team who seemed to enjoy the crack of leather across their buttocks far more than they should have.*

## Misleading

It has been fairly recently that I have seen the letters in your magazine that people are saying give game companies a fair go and \$90 is a fair price for a game. All I have to say is what's up? Why are we making excuses for these companies? Look at how they mislead us with their minimum system requirements (Unreal, TA: Kingdoms being prime examples). Most games nowadays are unplayable at the minimum requirements, and why do they do print them then? To sell more copies to unsuspecting buyers, of course.

A major sore point is releasing unfinished games (Ultima 9 and Sin spring to mind) and patching them up later. Why do they do that? To make more money of course. There are other examples, but this should demonstrate that the companies are there to make money first and foremost and we would be playing into their game if we convince ourselves that it's all worth it. For my \$90, I expect a game not a beta copy. At the state games are currently being released it might even become the standard. If we don't demand better then we won't get better!

I'm not saying be a pirate, but expect more

## Byte Size

Hi.

A friend of mine (who also introduced me to PCPP) said that a computer will blow up if it's turned on for more than 24 hours.

Is that true?

### Jack Shen, Email

*Of course. Put down this priceless tome and switch off your PC before it's too late!*

from the companies, never less!

### Thach Nguyen, Email

*The simplest solution to this most vexatious of problems is to make those companies aware of your dissatisfaction with their products, and refuse to buy their games if they don't clean up their act. Cavedog suffered the consequences, and so will other companies who treat their customers badly.*

## Keeping Up

Why, why, oh why are games so good? I never would have thought I'd say it but there are too many games out there for me to handle. This is probably not helped by the fact that I love all good games apart from sporting games (I believe that if you want to play sport you should go and play for real not on the computer). So I have to pay attention to all variations of game genres and I just don't have



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Overexposure

I'd like to voice my disgust at the over exposure of soon to be released games now days. Now with dozens of gaming mags and thousands of web sites dedicated to gaming we just aren't getting any more surprises with our games. Even months before game goes gold we are flooded with countless screen shots and descriptions of weapons and levels. I'm sure we can all remember the feeling we got when first loading games like Doom and Duke3d. These games came from no where and there was great enjoyment of discovering new weapons and meeting a new enemy. A prime example of an overexposed game is Diablo 2. Blizzard has released countless screen shots and not to mention all the information being leaked by beta testers.

To sum up, I just want to feel like a virgin gamer every time I load up a new game.

### Aaron, Email

*We couldn't agree more, especially when it comes to the likes of Diablo 2. Unfortunately, there's not a whole lot that*



*can be done about the problem. Game companies and the gaming media enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. Gaming publications need material to attract readers, while game companies need media coverage in order for their products to sell. It is therefore unlikely that those 'good old days' of gaming will ever be resurrected. Our only consolation lies in the fact that we were fortunate enough to witness, first hand, that formative era that so many fondly remember.*



## Byte Size

Hey, just thought I'd let you all know that in issue 48 you have a picture of a Quake guy saying his favourite game played is Unreal Tournament. Ha, you would think that he would at least be bagging out the games he is in competition with, right?

**N8, Email**

*Not necessarily. Though many of us prefer Q3 over UT, we can still appreciate UT for the thoroughly enjoyable game that it is.*

the time/money to keep up with all the games. The Sims, System Shock 2, Half-Life: Opposing Force, Planescape: Torment, Q3A, UT, C&C Tiberian Sun, Messiah, Nomad Soul, Thief2, and that's not all!

How do I choose between them all? And how many people have this problem?

**Simon Paterson, Email**

*Ahhh, the classic curse of the avid gamer. Good games are like \$50 notes: you can never have enough of them. But when we find that we don't have enough time to play them all, we take our cue from nature. In times of plenty, store away surplus games in preparation for those dark days when it seems like nothing decent will be coming out for the next five months. Then you'll always have a stash of the good stuff to tide you over.*

## Repetitive Games

I have been a gamer for at least 3 years now, and I recently was shocked to realise that while most games are fun to start with, i.e Half-life with its first level and Quake 3 showing off its great graphics, they become very repetitive after a while. Now, for games like Battlezone



and Dungeon Keeper, they at least keep some variety because you can at least switch from strategy to firstperson shooter.

What's going on?

**Richard Hebden, Email**

*Such is the nature of the gaming industry. An alarming number of titles are simply rehashes of classic titles, albeit with updated graphics and a few trivial gameplay differences. This does, however, make us appreciate truly innovative titles like System Shock 2, the Thief series and Deus Ex all the more.*



## Game Prices

In response to the letter in PCPP #48 titled "PC Gaming. Not as costly as you might think".

If the manufactures of games and all other software sold their software for \$20 to \$40 each then more people would go and buy them.

At the present moment people just go and buy a pirated copy of the game or app that they like, they feel bad about it but they still do it because \$90 is too much!

Manufactures should sell their software cheaper. They'd sell much more and copyright laws would be broken less meaning better for everyone. I personally would prefer to give 30 bucks to the manufacture of a game so they can make new more exciting games than give 10 bucks to a friend to copy it for me.

Cheaper games = More sold = More profit!

**Ryan Williams, Email**

There are two reasons behind the high cost of games: development costs and profit margins. Most titles cost extraordinary amounts of money to create. In addition to the cost of hardware and myriad other things, the salaries of every person involved in the development process must be paid. On top of this, publishing and distribution costs are prohibitively high. When you consider the fact that games take, on average, two years to make, it's little wonder that the majority of titles ship to retailers at a wholesale price of between \$50 and \$65. Retailers also want their cut, so they add \$30 or \$40 to the price tag. For gamers on a tight budget, paying \$90 for a game may seem a tad exorbitant. But when you consider the number of hours of entertainment that the average game provides, it's really quite reasonable.

## Byte Size

How much do you get paid to play games and write up stuff?

And sit around and talk?

**Lukus Potts, Email**

*Nothing. Like monks, we have forsaken all our worldly possessions and live only for the betterment of civilisation. That, and Thief 2.*

## CD Violence

Hi guys,

I have an interesting thought about this whole silly issue.

I am sure that Aussies play just as many violent, bloody & frag-filled games (yay!) as our Yankee counterparts, but how often do we hear about school-yard massacres in Australia?

Could it be something to do with the fact that every second American owns a gun, and here in Australia we actually realise that guns are dangerous and make it harder to get hold of them?

I've heard lots of stories about psycho American teens gunning down all their friends, but I have never heard of anyone being clubbed to death by the Quake 3 Arena CD.

I think there's something in that for all of us, don't you?

Cheers,

**Bec Allard, Email**

Hmmm...

## Mass Madness

It seems that we've got a relatively new, expanding genre on our hands: Massively Multiplayer Online Games. It seems that many game developers have one of these MMOGs ►



## PC POWER PLAY WANTS YOU!

- We know you like reading reviews, but have you ever written one?
- We know you like playing games, but have you ever designed one?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, then we want to hear from you.

### Reader Reviews

In an upcoming issue, PCPP will be launching a regular Reader Review page where each month one lucky (well, witty, literate and eloquent, too - but mostly lucky) reader will have his or her opinion broadcast to the world. Do you think that Over-hyped Blockbuster Game X is really a pile of tosh? Or is Obscure Little Niche Title Y actually a slice of genius? Maybe - heaven forbid - you just want to confirm that our review was spot on? All you need to do is send a 500 word review - remembering to fill out the score box and include a URL for the Extra box - of a relatively recent release game to: [reader\\_review@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:reader_review@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

### Reader CD

Also, in the future, every edition of CD PowerPlay will come complete with a selection of the best maps, levels, mods and skins, all supplied by our most talented readers. So if you've ever built a level for Unreal Tournament, designed a mission for Thief II, or planned a map for Age of Kings, send it to us so that all our readers can share in your creation. Skins for Quake 3, wallpaper for The Sims, even an entire Total Conversion for Half-Life - it doesn't matter what as long as you think it might be of interest to your fellow readers. If it's good then it'll be welcomed on our cover discs.

Files of less than 1MB can be send to [reader\\_cd@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:reader_cd@pcpowerplay.next.com.au), while anything larger should be zipped onto a cd or floppy disk and posted to:

Reader CD, PC PowerPlay, Level 6 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills 2010

► in the works (in issue 48 of PCPP, there's mention of no less than six of these online games in development) and it's getting so that gamers like myself just can't ignore most of them any more.

I know that Ultima Online has enjoyed great success since its release a couple of years ago, and admittedly I have journeyed myself into the world of Britannia on more than one occasion. EverQuest and Asheron's Call have been calling me, but up to now I have resisted that call, and here's why: MMOG's are great, but at the moment, they demand too much of my life for me to justify such a commitment.

In a perfect world, MMOG's would be properly regulated and require less time spent online, and money to play them.

PS: The thought of Black Isle doing one is very exciting!

### Hilander, Email

*Can't devote time to developing a character?  
There's always online auction sites...*

### Dud Demos

What is the gaming world coming too? If I read a review in PCPP I might think "that sounds cool", then I dig around till I find a demo. When I do, I find I am lucky to get a full level's worth any more. Look at Doom and Quake their demos where a whole episode. At least Valve made a decent effort with Half-Life: Uplink, as did Looking Glass with Thief, both these games are extremely involved and hard so this justifies the length of the demo. I played the Requiem demo the other day and it

turns out all you have to do is kill a handful of demonic dogs and a freaky demon.

I believe demos are an important art for game designers to learn. If you want people to buy your game, try giving them a decent demo of it rather than a small slice of the first level.

### Angus Busby AKA Sachiel, Email

*Well said. Though, with the already huge size of most demos, offering a decent proportion of the entire game would mean countless hours of downloading for those of us without cable connections.*

### Opinions

This is a belated complaint about complainers. Specifically, those who sent you all those letters in issue 46. The thing you need to understand is that this magazine simply represents the view of its writers on games. A game review is the opinions of the reviewer about that game. Opinions are the entire reason for buying the magazine - and yet so many of you were outraged when PCPP chose to publish their opinions on what would comprise their Top 50. Now, a readers choice of top 50 games may differ but that doesn't mean they are right either. Opinions are not Boolean expressions, there is no right or wrong, just differences. So if someone happens to think that the best game of all time is minesweeper then good for them.

The purpose of the list, if I may be so presumptuous as to speak for PCPP, is to show the readers their collective agreement on the top 50. They're not to dictate to you what you

should like, but for you to compare your own views with. So stop being so offended that someone might not agree with you (god forbid), and just accept that other people might have views that deviate from your own. There, I can now get off my soapbox.

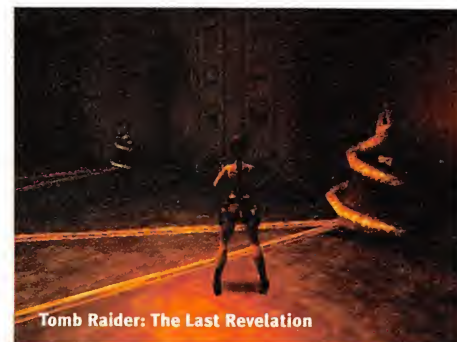
### Jonathan Gage, Email

*We couldn't have put it better ourselves.*

### Jolie Raider

Is it just me, or is this whole Angelina Jolie/Tomb Raider thing a little bit, well, off? It seems that Hollywood have finally recognised that games make more money than their flicks do, so they're starting to cash in on it. It used to be, make the film, then try and make a game (that usually turns out crap) and see how it'll go. Now it looks like it's going the other way.

I mean, look at Wing Commander, I made



the mistake of borrowing that from the video store and it was SHIT. So was Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat. I mean, Angelina Jolie looks the part, but unless they're planning on turning Lara into a neurotic mess I can't see it working. Anyway, Helena Bonham Carter would probably do a better job - at least she's British. But what the hell does Hollywood care? They made Devereux British when she should have been French.

### Annoyed, Email

*It all comes down to who the producers believe will draw in the crowds. We have yet to see a half decent movie based on a game, and the likelihood of this changing is extremely low. For every person who doesn't see a movie because they know it will suck, there are probably ten less discerning consumers more than happy to fork out the cost of admission. Sad, but true.*

### Byte Size

Regarding your article in "Read Error" about well endowed females inadvertently pressing keys with their breasts and getting spaces in typing. I was so relieved to hear of fellow sufferers.

### B Ibberson, Email

*We can't quite imagine your computer-using practices, but we're sure they can't be healthy.*



## MICROSOFT MADNESS



Who'd have thought things would have turned out this way. The same games publisher that brought us Deadly Tide and the forgettable Hellbender, now bring us shining examples of gaming excellence. Take a peek at games like Age of Empires II and the exhilarating Motocross Madness for a compelling argument. The question is - are these the games that Uncle Bill reject?

Well, those funky nerds at Microsoft have done it again, with a bumper crop of fantastic games making their way to your local games store. We reckon they're so good (okay, we've only played a late beta of Motocross Madness 2, but even at this stage the game simply rocks hard), that we're giving six lucky readers the chance to win a Microsoft Gaming Pack.

### EACH PACK INCLUDES:

#### 1 X MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

You want thrills and spills? Go watch Jerry Springer. If you want an enthralling action racer with plenty of groin pounding twists, then Motocross Madness 2 is for you. Fine tuning the magic of the first, Madness 2, Rainbow Studios have ramped up the stunt aspect and included heaps of cool environments to stack in. Sick!

#### 1 X STARLANCER

Erin Roberts, brother to Chris Roberts, (the man that gave birth to the space combat genre) has done fans of the series proud. Bringing more frantic spaceship duels to the PC, Starlancer thankfully does away with those awful bloody live-action cutscenes. Give praise and bask in the glory that is Digital Anvil's stunning debut title.

#### 1 X ASHERON'S CALL

Massively multiplayer RPGs are all the rage these days, and Turbine Software have made their mark with their smart interpretation of the genre, Asheron's Call. Often described as combining the good bits of Ultima Online and EverQuest, AC gets two large PCPP thumbs up for containing, thus far, the most considerate players yet in such a title.

#### QUESTION

What is Chris Roberts' middle name?

#### WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope. Tip: Don't forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

All entries close May 23rd.

Send to:

Microsoft Madness

PC PowerPlay

78 Renwick St.

Redfern NSW, 2016

### ISSUE 48 WINNERS

#### BATTLEZONE 2

Q: What is the name of the soon-to-be-released RTS game from the makers of BZ2?

A: Dark Reign 2

B. Thomson, Gosford NSW

L. Hutchinson, Ballarat VIC

A. Falan, Balwyn VIC

G. Gully, Keith SA

T. Pontre, Perth WA

#### ASHERON'S CALL

Q: What is the name of the land where you adventure in Asheron's Call?

A: Dereth

R. Courtenay, The Gap QLD

R. Traforti, St. Morris SA

E. Cornejo, Banks ACT

D. Constantine, Cottesloe WA

J. Sepkus, Northcliffe WA

C. Pinnell, Sydney NSW

#### NOX

Q: Which Nox culture lives in the north?

A: Neoromancers

M. Kinghorn, One Tree Hill SA

D. Bannister, Sandy Bay TAS

P. Marciano, Bull Creek WA

D. Foster, Jamboree Heights QLD

G. Johnson, Coorparoo QLD

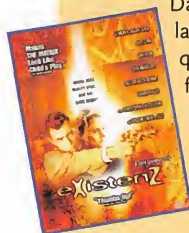




# dvd

## eXistenZ

M15+, Columbia Tristar  
 ■ Jennifer Jason Leigh and Jude Law star as beta-testers of a new virtual reality game in



David Cronenberg's latest film. Much questioning of reality follows in their attempts to survive the game, accompanied by buckets of disgusting animal innards and chicken bones (a trademark of Cronenberg's sci-fi). Interesting and inventive to some viewers, senseless and pointless to others. Trailer included.

## The Sixth Sense

M15+, Warner  
 ■ The hugely successful story of a boy that sees dead people and the psychologist that helps him out makes an impressive appearance on DVD. Featured with the fine film are interviews, documentaries, storyboard comparisons, trailer, and best of all, deleted scenes and "clues" feature. If only all DVDs were given the same special treatment...



## Wild Wild West

PG (M15+ in SA), Warner  
 ■ Based on a TV show that never made it to our shores, Wild Wild West was panned on release. And with good reason - so much of WWW is played for laughs that just don't come. The action and steam powered gadgets almost save things, though the giant steel spider contraption is hardly the surprise it was meant to be. Trailers, documentaries, music videos, making of said music videos, stills gallery, a PC game and 2 essays (!?) make up the bonus features.



# A Real 3D Engine

THE CAVE 2 VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE BEGINS



■ Once a popular concept in the late 80's, Virtual Reality has all but faded from the public eye. Enter, the CAVE: a state-of-the-art VR system reminiscent of Star Trek's HoloDeck. The CAVE's walls and floor act as display surfaces for high resolution projections, while the user stands within the CAVE and performs various actions using a device called a 'wand'. LCD stereo shutter glasses worn by the user give them the impression that they are immersed within a true 3D environment. Obviously, this sort of technology has innumerable potential applications in the research and development domain,

but what better way to take advantage of this cutting edge equipment than to use it to play games? The end result of an identical conclusion- CAVE Quake 2. Screenshots could never do the experience justice, but by all indications it's a hell of a lot of fun. Unfortunately, the multi-million dollar pricetag ensures that it'll be quite a few years before similar devices make an appearance in the home. Still, for proponents of VR in all its forms, such developments are undoubtedly encouraging. You can follow its progress at <http://brighton.ncsa.uiuc.edu/~prajlich/caveQuake>.



# Rainbow 6: The Movie

TOM CLANCY'S BEST SELLER IS COMING TO THE BIG SCREEN

■ Cinematic masterpieces like Street Fighter and Mario Bros have led many to conclude that game-to-movie translations are doomed to failure from the outset. Rainbow 6, however, may prove to be an exception- the movie's screenplay will be based on the successful Tom Clancy novel of the same name.

Paramount Pictures, developers of previous Clancy blockbusters like The Hunt For Red October and Patriot Games (and developers of the upcoming Tomb Raider movie), recently announced that work on the film will commence in the near future. We'll provide further details as development progresses.



# Big Tetris

**WORLD'S BIGGEST  
COMPUTER GAME**



■ Using fourteen custom-built circuit boards, a PC running the Linux OS and over 10,000 lights, students of America's Brown University worked for five months to transform their Sciences Library into a 12-story tall game of Tetris. La Bastille (the official name for the project) opened at 8pm on April 14 of this year and ran every night for a week. According to witnesses, the spectacle could be seen from several kilometers away. We can only hope that projects like this will provide inspiration for university students here in Sydney. We'll be first in line for Skyscraper Space Invaders.



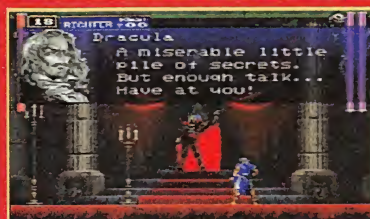
## Games we'd love to see on PC

### No.3: Castlevania: Symphony of the night (PSX)

■ Okay, yes, it's a three year old Playstation game. Sure, it looks just like another crappy side-scrolling platform game (which it isn't completely, it's got flick-screen sections, too), the kind of which the majority of PC gamers probably expect to never see again. And, well, maybe the animation lacks a certain fluidity, enemies regenerate as soon as you leave an area, and there's a heck of a lot of hacking and slashing through hordes of wimpy creatures once you gain one of the more powerful weapons. BUT!

Ah, you knew that was coming. But Castlevania just happens to be one of the most absorbing and playable videogames ever made. It's a platform game and RPG in one; success is equally dependent on how well you prepare for each encounter, in terms of equipping the appropriate items, as it is on manual dexterity with the control pad. Requiring deep thought and an ever-vigilant eye to unravel all its secrets, the castle itself is an exquisitely crafted exercise in game design. Memorable locations abound, with the gorgeous musical score and clever use of parallax both contributing to each scene's lasting impact.

Best of all, once you think you've reached the end, the whole game turns on its head (literally!) and you realise you're only half way... Sheer genius.



cd

### Bomb The Bass

"Beat Dis - The Very Best Of..."

(BMG)

■ A nice compilation of the late 80s and early 90s highlights of DJ and producer Tim Simenon's electro side-project. While some tracks have dated badly, the seminal "Beat Dis" still rules (okay, roolz), and the likes of "Winter In July" and "The Air You Breathe" anticipated trip-hop by four years. Also, older readers may recall the funky "Megablast" soundtracking the Bitmap Bros' Amiga shoot 'em up Xenon II.



### Travis

"The Man Who"

(Sony)  
■ These Brits are the latest thing and you shouldn't ignore them just because they're on the charts! Sitting somewhere between Jeff Buckley and Radiohead, minus the raucous, tending to the soppy. Still, these are tunes you can whistle on the bus - warm and ace!



### Various Artists

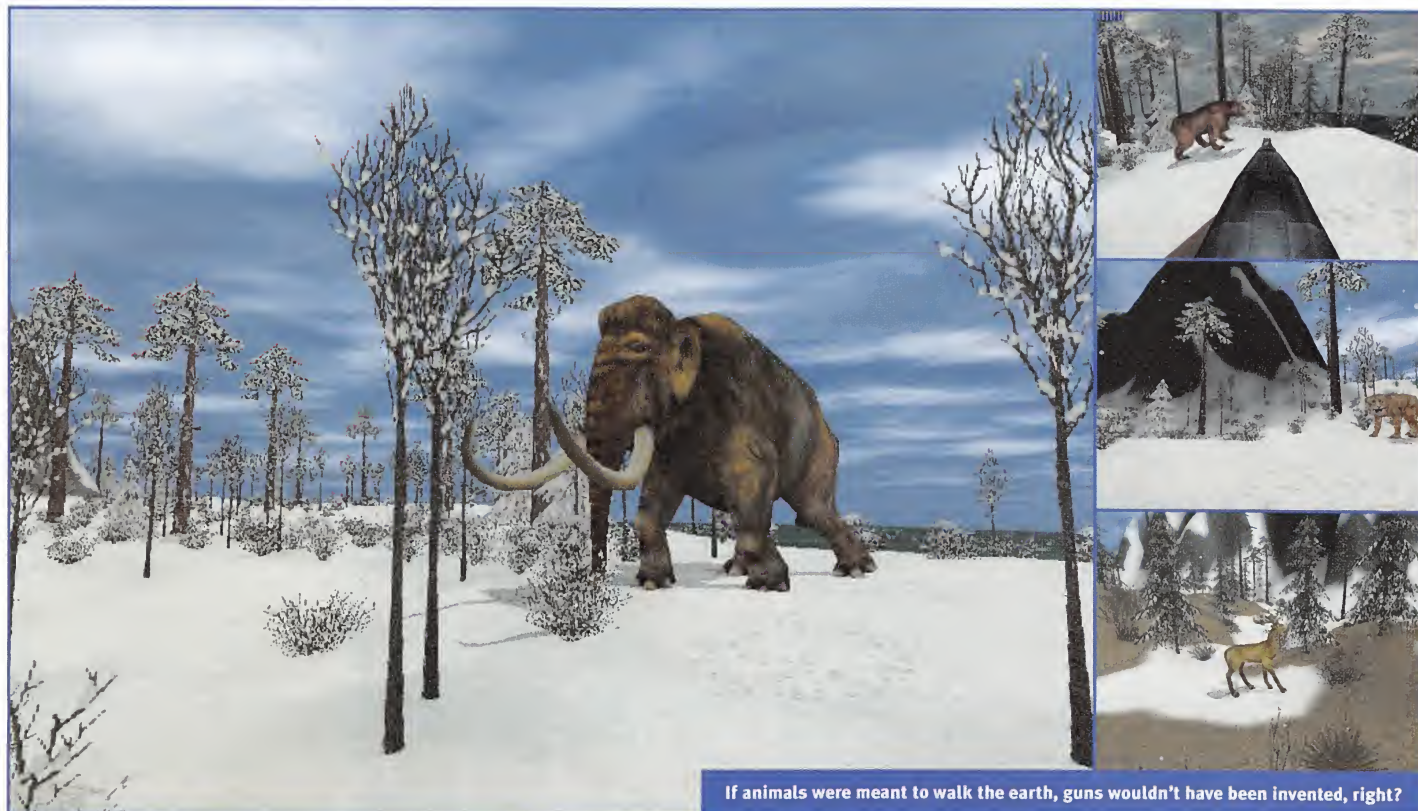
"2"

(Central Station)

■ 99.3FM's second compilation album features an outstanding selection of the world's best club anthems. Favourites like 'Baby Wants to Ride', 'Sway' (Mucho Mambo), 'Get Up 2 Da Track' and 'Mars Needs Women' round out two CD's of masterfully mixed, adrenaline pumping tracks. Check it out.







If animals were meant to walk the earth, guns wouldn't have been invented, right?

## Carnivores 3

A NEW AGE FOR HUNTING SIMS

■ The last in the forgettable Carnivores series takes place on an alien planet that conveniently bears an eerie similarity to our own Earth at the time of the last ice age. Woolly mammoths, reindeer, sabre-tooth tigers, rhinoceroses and grizzly bears roam the snowy landscape of this prehistoric world - and it's your job to shoot them. There's not even some sort of flimsy excuse (or plot) for such wanton barbarism: a megacorporation has bagged the rights to exterminate all life on the planet's surface, with the player cast as an ever-obliging employee. The game's developer, Action Forms, promises a level of realism as yet unattained by other hunting - cough, cough - simulations. Harmless fun for the inbred, we're sure.

## Risk II

BORED GAME OR AUTHENTIC TRANSLATION?

■ For the boardgame lovers comes the latest attempt to recreate Risk on the PC. There have been so many versions and variations on multiple platforms that we're not sure who hasn't tried it at least once. Risk II from Hasbro builds on their first Risk game from a couple of years ago, utilising the impressive graphics and clear-cut rules and board design, whilst working on almost all of their problem areas. The main improvement has been (thankfully) to the multiplayer element with hotseat and network support fully integrated into the product. Now you can actually enjoy playing against other people AND the PC.

Andrew Parsons

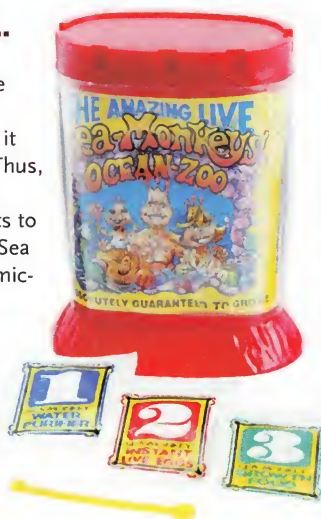


It's not the same game without the miniatures

## See the monkeys

THE VIRTUAL PET PHENOMENON CONTINUES...

■ Avid PCPP readers will of course be well aware of our predilection toward mankind's nearest relative. Monkeys, it should go without saying, are great. Thus, it pleases us immensely to hear that Creature Labs has signed up the rights to design a game based on the famous Sea Monkeys, a long time favourite of comic-reading kids since the 50s. With Sea Monkey Marina, you'll be able to create yourself a batch of "instant pets" to nurture thanks to Creature Labs clever artificial life technology, most recently seen in the Creatures series.





# The Forgotten

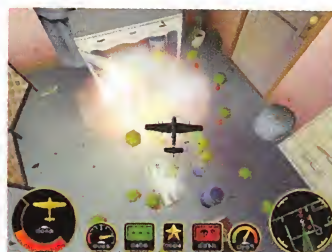
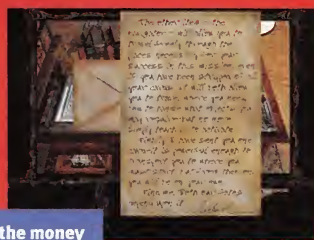
**DEVELOPER: RANSOM INTERACTIVE**  
**PUBLISHER: DREAMCATCHER INTERACTIVE**

■ This is one of the new wave of slide show adventure/strategy games coming on to the market (yep, hold on to your loose bits - there's a resurgence on its way). Set in New Orleans in the 30's and dealing with the occult, The Forgotten is the first installment in a series created by Ransom. Cool puzzles and much voodoo about with suitably dark and gloomy backdrops, desolate streets and not a clue of what you're doing (you have amnesia) is the order of gameplay. Mysterious cards that aren't really explained seem to be the central theme of the game, however - perhaps to Ransom's credit) - we can't be sure. Funnily enough though, the game comes with a Strategic Clues and Solutions Booklet that walks you through the entire game.

Agata Budinska



Leave the money  
in a paper bag...

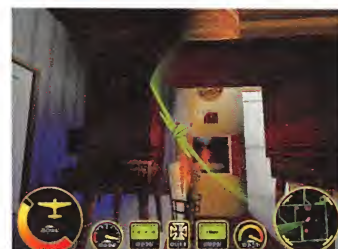


## Airfix Dogfighter

**TAKE TO THE SKIES IN  
CARDBOARD AND GLUE**

■ With an eye on the casual gamer market, Swedish developer UDS is working on a title with the unique promise of "Furious Modelkit Combat". Airfix Dogfighter is a World War II sim - with a difference.

That is, the action takes place in your living room. Well, in your living room, through the kitchen, under the bed, across the pool, between the clotheslines, and back again through the front door, to be precise. A selection of fifteen model aircraft can be flown either on a series of missions (carpet bombing, perhaps?) or in a stunt mode. Daft as it might sound, following the success of the Army Men series, who's to say this won't prove equally popular?



## TONY the Reviewing Monkey IN

## "Talkin' the Talk"

© J. Dewhurst 2000







Next month in

**PC**PowerPlay

Full report from the **Electronic Entertainment Expo 2000** on the games to get excited about.

PCPP #51 on sale June 28, 2000



# Just Cooler

## Worldwide Patents



**DR-100**  
Just cooler system de-HUMIDIFIER

**NEW**

### SS-100

Protect a system against accidental power On/Off & Reset by installing an intelligent electronic security guard. Changeable PIN prevents unauthorised access to your data. Built-in timer allows variable operation time. A timer countdown can be set to turn off your PC.

**NEW**

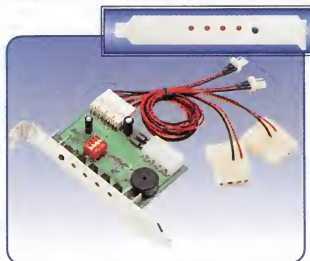
### NB-600

Reduce your notebook's operating temperature with three Ultra slim exhaust fans. Avoid system lock-ups, extend a notebook's lifetime.

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#### FEATURES & BENEFIT

- Almighty protection to your computer system through FA-100 Buzzer sound and pilot indication.
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- Easy installation and system cooling is fully guaranteed.
- Reset switch serves as silencer to user before replacement.



### HD-600

New Design for HARD DISK

- Extend HARD DISK life and reliability.
- **ANTI-DUST** and simple installation.
- Airflow : 18CFM



## System Fan



### FC-900L

- Extra long duct mainboard internal cooler

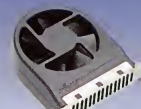
### ST-900

- Mainboard cooling kit fit into a 3.5" bay



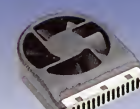
### FC-500PS

- FC-500 With installation adaptor.
- Fits for print port and slot.



### FC-100

- Dimension: 120 x 90 x 27mm
- Airflow: 32 CFM
- Voltage: 12V
- System cooler for Pentium II & A.G.P. Card



### FC-200

- Dimension: 108 x 90 x 27mm
- Airflow: 32 CFM
- Voltage: 12V
- System cooler for server, raid, industrial computer (on SCSI port)

### TT-900 Twin Turbo:

#### FEATURE & BENEFITS

- Dual 9CM Fans / 80CFM
- Fits any 5.25" Bay
- High Performance and Low noise
- Easy Installation



### Monitor Cooler



MC-100

### NoteBook Cooler

The PCMCIA external cooling kit



NB-100

### HDD Cooler

#### 5.25" Bay



#### 3.5" Bay

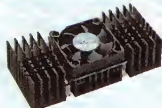


## CPU Cooler / Second Fan



### P-02SII

For SECCII & Pentium III



### P-03A

for Pentium II & Athlon/K7



### P-200

for Pentium & K6



**SF-600**  
(60 x 60 x 25mm)  
**SF-800**  
(80 x 80 x 25mm)  
**SF-801(3 wire)**  
(80 x 80 x 25mm)  
**SF-900**  
(92 x 92 x 25mm)



### P-22SII (Dual Fans)

For SECCII & Pentium III



### P-22A (Dual Fans)

For Pentium II & Athlon/K7



### P-500

For Socket 7, Socket 370 300Mhz and up



### P-600 (6cm Fan)

For Socket 7, Socket 370 500Mhz and up



### P-32SII (Three Fans)

For SECCII & Pentium III



### P-05A (Three Fans)

For Pentium II & Athlon/K7



### CH-410

For AGP Card, Voodoo Card.



### CH-420

For AGP Card, Voodoo Card.



### P-22C (Dual Fans)

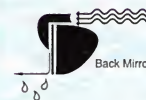
For celeron



P-02C  
For celeron

## WINDPOWER WD-100

FOR CAR SAFE DRIVING



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